Galaxy
SCIENCE FICTION

FEBRUARY 1955

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HELPFULLY YOURS
By Evelyn E. Smith

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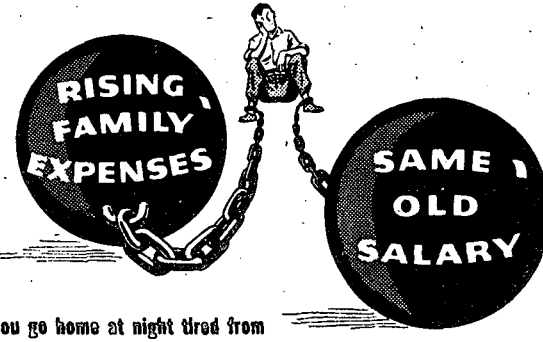

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FEBRUARY, 1955 VOL. 9, NO. 5

Galaxy

SCIENCE FICTION

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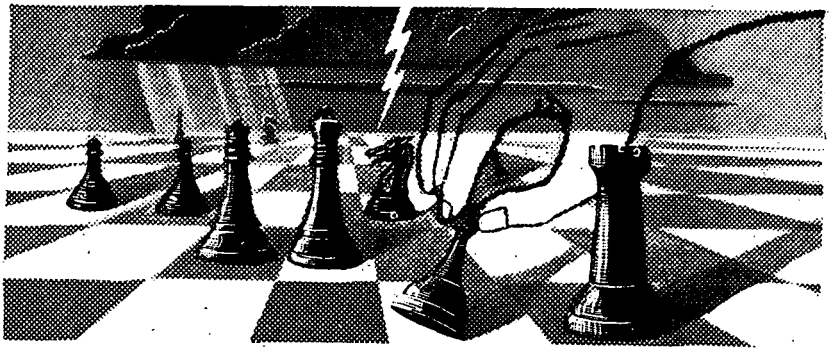

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PAST PERFORMANCE

TRUE enough, we are just barely at the threshold of space flight, but we have every right to speculate on how our colonies on other planets may develop. However, it's only by studying the past that we can guess shrewdly at the future. The trick, of course, is not to get stuck in the past, but to use it as a departure point.

American Ways of Life by George R. Stewart (Doubleday) does just that. It opens with an exciting and entirely legitimate speculation:

"Let us momentarily make use of a device of science fiction, and imagine a 'historical' event that never occurred . . . During one of the vigorous and expansive periods of the Chinese Empire, one of their navigators (who might have been named Ko Lum Bo) conceived the idea of sailing eastward from China and thus arriving at Ireland, which was known to be the farthest outpost of Europe. The Chinese wished to reach Ireland, it may be believed, because they had heard tales that those barbarous islanders made a certain drink called Wis Ki.

"Ko Lum Bo made his voyage, and discovered a country that he supposed to be part of Ireland, although he was disappointed in not finding any Wis Ki being manufactured by the natives.

". . . The Chinese colonized this country, eventually discovering it to be not Ireland, but a wholly new continent. Nevertheless they continued to call the natives Irish, or sometimes Red Irish.

"The Chinese colonists introduced their own well-established ways of life. They continued to speak Chinese, and to practice their own religion . . . to use their comfortable flowing garments, and pagodas dotted the landscape. In short, civilization was Asiatic and not European."

Exploring the origins of our ways of life in language, religion, food, drink, clothing, shelter, sex, personal names, play, holidays and art, Stewart proves that these are established mostly by the conditioning—he calls it heredity, which is confusing—of the first settlers. Those who come after contribute words, phrases, cookery, but tend generally to be assimilated in all ways except, perhaps, religion.

Names, for example, are exchanged for "American" ones—actually English in most cases. The desire to conform is only

(*Continued on page* 143)

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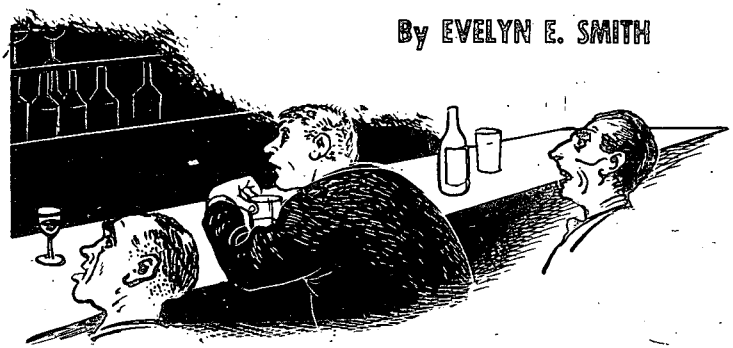
HELPFULLY YOURS

"Come down to Earth—and stay there!" is a humiliating order for somebody with wings!

By EVELYN E. SMITH



TARB Morfatch had read all the information on Terrestrial customs that was available in the *Times* morgue before she'd left Fizbus. And all through the journey she'd studied her *Brief Introduction to Terrestrial Manners and Mores* avidly. Perhaps it was a bit overinspirational in spots, but it had facts in it, too.

So she knew that, since the natives were non-alate, she was not to take wing on Earth. She had, however, forgotten to correlate the knowledge of their winglessness with her own vertical habits. As a result, on leaving the tender that had ferried her down from the Moon, she looked up instead of right and narrowly escaped death at the jaws of a raging groundcar that swerved out onto the field.

She recognized it as a taxi from one of the pictures in the

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handbook. It was a pity, she thought sadly as she was knocked off her feet, that all those lessons she had so carefully learned were to go to waste.

But it was only the wind of the car's passage that had thrown her down. As she struggled to get up, hampered by her awkward native skirts, the door of the taxi flew open. A tall young man—a Fizbian—burst out, the soft yellowish-green down on his handsome face bristling with fright until each feather stood out separately.

"Miss Morfatch! Are you all right?"

"Just—just a little shaky," she murmured, brushing dirt from her rosy leg feathers. *Too young to be Drosmig; too good-looking to be anyone important,* she thought glumly. *Must be the office boy.*

To her surprise, he didn't help her up. Probably it would violate some native taboo if he did, she deduced. The handbook hadn't mentioned anything that seemed to apply, but, after all, a little book like that couldn't cover everything.

SHE could see the young man was embarrassed—his emerald crest was waving to and fro.

"I'm Stet Zarnon," he introduced himself awkwardly.

The Managing Editor! The handsome young employer of her girlish dreams! But perhaps he had a wife on Fizbus—no, the Grand Editor made a point of hiring people without families to use as a pretext for expensive vacations on the Home Planet.

As she opened her mouth to say something brilliantly witty, to show she was no ordinary female but a creature of spirit and fire and intelligence, a sudden cacophony of shrill cries and explosions arose, accompanied by bursts of light. Her feathers stood erect and she clung to her employer with both feathered legs.

"If these are the friendly diplomatic relations Earth and Fizbus are supposed to be enjoying," she said, "I'm not enjoying them one bit!"

"They're only taking pictures of you with native equipment," he explained, pulling away from her. What was the matter with him? "You're the first Fizbian woman ever to come to Terra, you know."

She certainly did know—and, what was more, she had made the semi-finals for Miss Fizbus only the year before. Perhaps he had some Terrestrial malady he didn't want her to catch. Or could it be that in the four years he had spent in voluntary exile on this planet, he had come to prefer the native females? Now it was her turn to shrink from him.

He was conversing rapidly in

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Terran with the chattering natives who milled about them. Although Tarb had been an honors student in Terran back at school, she found herself unable to understand more than an occasional word of what they said. Then she remembered that they were not at the world capital, Ottawa, but another community, New York. Undoubtedly they were all speaking some provincial dialect peculiar to the locality.

And nobody at all booed in appreciation, although, she told herself sternly, she really couldn't have expected them to. Standards of beauty were different in different solar systems. At least they were picking up as souvenirs some of the feathers she'd shed in her tumble, which showed they took an interest.

Stet turned back to her. "These are fellow-members of the press."

She was able to catch enough of what he said next in Terran to understand that she was being formally introduced to the aboriginal journalists. Although you could never call the natives attractive, with their squat figures and curiously atrophied vestigial wings—*arms,* she reminded herself—they were very Fizboid in appearance and, with their winglessness cloaked, could have creditably passed for singed Fizbians.

Moreover, they seemed friendly; at any rate, the sounds they uttered were welcoming. She began to make the three ritual *entrechats,* but Stat stopped her. "Just smile at them; that'll be enough."

It didn't seem like enough, but he was the boss.

"THANK the stars we're through with that," he sighed, as they finally were able to escape their confrères and get into the taxi. "I suppose," he added, wriggling inside the clumsy Terrestrial jacket which, cut to fit over his wings, did nothing either to improve his figure or to make him look like a native, "it was as much of an ordeal for you as for me."

"Well, I am a little bewildered by it all," Tarb admitted, settling herself as comfortably as possible on the seat cushions.

"No, don't do that!" he cried. "Here people don't crouch on seats. They sit," he explained in a kindlier tone. "Like this."

"You mean I have to bend myself in that clumsy way?"

He nodded. "In public, at least."

"But it's so hard on the wings. I'm losing feathers foot over claw."

"Yes, but you could . . ." He stopped. "Well, anyhow, remember we have to comply with local customs. You see, the Terrestrials have those things called arms

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instead of legs. That is, they have legs, but they use them only for walking."

She sighed. "I'd read about the arms, but I had no idea the natives would be so—so primitive as to actually use them."

"Considering they had no wings, it was very clever of them to make use of the vestigial appendages," he said hotly. "If you take their physical limitations into account, they've done a marvelous job with their little planet. They can't fly; they have very little sense of balance; their vision is exceedingly poor—yet, in spite of all that, they have achieved a quite remarkable degree of civilization." He gestured toward the horizontal building arrangements visible through the window. "Why, you could almost call those streets. As a matter of fact, the natives do."

At the moment, she could take an interest in Terrestrial civilization only as it affected her personally. "But I'll be able to relax in the office, won't I?"

"To a certain extent," he replied cautiously. "You see, we have to use a good deal of native help because—well, our facilities are limited . . ."

"Oh," she said.

Then she remembered that she was on Terra at least partly to demonstrate the pluck of Fizbian femininity. Back on Fizbus, most of the *Times* executives had been dead set against having a woman sent out as Drosmig's assistant. But Grupe, the Grand Editor, had overruled them. "Time we broke with tradition," he had said. He'd felt she could do the job, and, by the stars, she would justify his faith in her!

"Sounds like rather a lark," she said hollowly.

STET brightened. "That's the girl!" His eyes, she noticed, were emerald shading into turquoise, like his crest. "I certainly hope you'll like it here. Very wise of Grupe to send a woman instead of a man, after all. Women," he went on quickly, "are so much better at working up the human interest angle. And Drosmig is out of commission most of the time, so it's you who'll actually be in charge of 'Helpfully Yours.'"

She herself in charge of the column that had achieved interstellar fame in three short years! Basically, it had been designed to give guidance, advice and, if necessary, comfort to those Fizbians who found themselves living on Terra, for the Fizbus *Times* had stood for public service from time immemorial. As Grupe had put it, "We don't run this paper for ourselves, Tarb, but for our readers. And the same applies to our Terrestrial edition."

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With the growing development of trade and cultural relations between the two planets, the Fizbians on Earth were an ever-increasing number. But they were not the only readers of "Helpfully Yours." Reprinted in the parent paper, it was read with edification and pleasure all over Fizbus. Everyone wanted to learn more about the ancient and other-worldly Terran culture.

The handbook, *A Brief Introduction to Terrestrial Manners and Mores,* owed much of its content to "Helpfully Yours." A grateful, almost fulsome, introductory note had said so. But the column truly deserved all the praise that had been lavished upon it by the handbook. How well she had studied the thoughtful letters that filled it and the excellent and well-reasoned advice —erring, if it erred at all, on the side of overtolerance—that had been given in return. Of course, on Earth, spiritual adjustment apparently was more important than the physical; you could tell that from the questions that were asked. A number of the letters had been reprinted in an appendix to the manual.

New York

Dear Senbot Drosmig:

When in contact with Terrestrial culture, I find myself constantly overawed and weighed down by the knowledge of my own inadequacy. I cannot seem to appreciate the local art forms as disseminated by the juke box, the comic strip, the tabloid.

How can I help myself toward a greater understanding?

Hopefully yours,
Gnurmis Plitt

Dear Mr. Plitt:

Remember, Orkv was not excavated in a week. It took the Terrestrials many centuries to develop their exquisite and esoteric art forms. How can you expect to comprehend them in a few short years? Expose yourself to their art. Work, study, meditate.

Understanding will come, I promise you.

Helpfully yours,
Senbot Drosmig

Paris

Dear Senbot Drosmig:

To think that I am enjoying the benefits of Terra while my wife and little ones are forced to remain on Fizbus makes my heart ache. Surely it is not fair that I should have so much and they so little. Imagine the inestimable advantage to the fledgling of even a short contact with Terrestrial culture!

Why cannot my loved ones come to join me so that we can share all these wonderful spiritual experiences and be enriched

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by them together?

Poignantly yours,

Tpooly N'Ox

Dear Mr. N'Ox:

After all, it has been only five years since Fizbian spaceships first came into contact with Terra. In keeping with our usual colonial policy—so inappropriate and anachronistic when applied to a well-developed civilization like Terra's—at first only males are allowed to go to the new world until it is made certain over a period of years that the planet is safe for mothers and future mothers of Fizbus.

But Stet Zarnon himself, the celebrated and capable editor of the Terran edition of *The Fizbus Times*, has taken up your cause, and I promise you that eventually your loved ones will be able to join you.

Meanwhile, work, study, meditate.

Helpfully yours,

Senbot Drosmig

Ottawa

Dear Senbot Drosmig:

Having just completed a two-year tour of duty on Earth as part of a diplomatic mission, I am regretfully leaving this fair planet. What books, what objects of art, what, in short, souvenirs shall I take back to Fizbus which will give our people some small idea of Earth's rich cultural heritage and, at the same time, serve as useful and appropriate gifts for my friends and relatives back Home?

Inquiringly yours,

Solgus Zagroot

Dear Mr. Zagroot:

Take back nothing but your memories. They will be your best souvenirs.

Out of context, any other mementos might convey little, if anything, of the true beauty and advanced spirituality of Terrestrial culture, and you might cheapen them were you to use them crassly as souvenirs. Furthermore, it is possible that you, in your ignorance, might unwittingly select some items that give a distorted and false idea of our extrafizbian friends.

The Fizbian-Earth Cultural Commission, sponsored by *The Fizbian Times*, in conjunction with the consulate, is preparing a vast program of cultural interchange. Leave it to them to do the great work, for you can be sure they will do it well.

And be sure to tell your fellow-laborers in the diplomatic vineyards that it is wiser not to send unapproved Terran souvenirs back Home. They might cause a fatal misunderstanding between the two worlds. Tell them to spend their time on

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Earth in working, studying and meditating, rather than shopping.

Helpfully yours,
Senbot Drosmig

AND now she—Tarb Morfatch—herself was going to be the guiding spirit that brought enlightenment and uplift to countless thousands on Terra and millions on Fizbus. Her name wouldn't appear on the columns, but the reward of having helped should be enough. Besides, Drosmig was due to retire soon. If she proved herself competent, she would take over the column entirely and get the byline. Grupe had promised faithfully.

But what, she wondered, had put Drosmig "out of commission"?

The taxi drew up before a building with a vulgar number of floors showing above ground.

"Ah—before we—er—meet the others," Stet suggested, twitching his crest, "I was wondering whether you would care to—er—have dinner with me tonight?"

This roused Tarb from her speculations. "Oh, I'd love to!" *A date with the boss right away!*

Stet fumbled in his garments for appropriate tokens with which to pay the driver. "You—you're not engaged or anything back Home, Miss Morfatch?"

"Why, no," she said. "It so happens that I'm not."

"Splendid!" He made an abortive gesture with his leg, then let her get out of the taxi by herself "It makes the natives stare," he explained abashedly.

"But why shouldn't they?" she asked, wondering whether to laugh or not. "How could they help but stare? We are different." *He must be joking.* She ventured a smile.

He smiled back, but made no reply.

The pavement was hard under her thinly covered soles. Now that walking looked as if it would present a problem, the ban on wing use loomed more threateningly. She had, of course, walked before—on wet days when her wings were waterlogged or in high winds or when she had surface business. However, the sidewalks on Fizbus were soft and resilient. Now she understood why the Terrestrials wore such crippling foot armor, but that didn't make her feel any better about it.

A box-shaped machine took the two Fizbians up to the twentieth story in twice the time it would have taken them to fly the same distance. Tarb supposed that the offices were in an attic instead of a basement because exchange difficulties forced the *Times* to such economy. She

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wondered ruefully whether her own expense account would also suffer.

But it was no time to worry about such sordid matters; most important right now was making a favorable impression on her co-workers. She did want them to like her.

Taking out her compact, she carefully polished her eyeballs. The man at the controls of the machine practically performed a ritual *entrechat*.

"Don't do that!" Stet ordered in a harsh whisper.

"But why not?" she asked, unable to restrain a trace of belligerence from her voice. He hadn't been very polite himself. "The handbook said respectable Terran women make up in public. Why shouldn't I?"

HE sighed. "It'll take time for you to catch on, I suppose. There's a lot the handbook doesn't—can't—cover. You'll find the setup here rather different from on Fizbus," he went on as he kicked open the door neatly lettered *THE FIZBUS TIMES* in both Fizbian and Terran. "We've found it expedient to follow the local newspaper practice. For instance—" he indicated a small green-feathered man seated at a desk just beyond the railing that bisected the room horizontally—"we have a Copy Editor."

"What does he do?" she asked, confused.

"He copies news from the other papers, of course."

"And what are *you* doing tonight, Miss Morfatch?" the Copy Editor asked, springing up from his desk to execute the three ritual entrechats with somewhat more verve than was absolutely necessary.

"Having dinner with me," Stet said quickly.

"Pulling rank, eh, old bird? Well, we'll see whether position or sterling worth will win out in the end."

As the rest of the staff crowded around Tarb, leaping and booing as appreciatively as any girl could want, she managed to snatch a rapid look around. The place wasn't really so very much different from a Fizbian newsroom, once she got over the oddity of going across, not up and down, with the desks—queerly shaped but undeniably desks—arranged side by side instead of one over the other. There were chairs and stools, no perches, but that was to be expected in a wingless society. And it was noisy. Even though the little machines had stopped clattering when she came in, a distant roaring continued, as if, concealed somewhere close by, larger, more sinister machines continued their work. A peculiar smell hung in

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the air—not unpleasant, exactly, but strange.

She sniffed inquiringly.

"Ink," Stet said.

"What's that?"

"Oh, some stuff the boys in the back shop use. The feature writers," he went on quickly, before she could ask what the "back shop" was, "have private offices where they can perch in comfort."

He led the way down a corridor, opening doors. "Our drama editor." He indicated a middle-aged man with faded blue feathers, who hung head downward from his perch. "On the lobster-trick last night writing a review, so he's catching fifty-one twinkles now."

"Enchanted, Miss Morfatch," the critic said, opening one bright eye. "By a curious chance, it so happens that tonight I have two tickets to—"

"Tonight she's going out with me."

"Well, I can get tickets to any play, any night. And you haven't laughed unless you've seen a Terrestrial drama. Just say the word, chick."

Stet got Tarb out of the office and slammed the door shut. "Over here is the office of our food editor," he said, breathing hard, "whom you'll be expected to give a claw to now and then, since your jobs overlap. Can't introduce you to him right now, though, because he's in the hospital with ptomaine poisoning. And this is the office you'll share with Drosmig."

Stet opened the door.

UNDERNEATH the perch, Senbot Drosmig, dean of Fizbian journalists, lay on the rug in a sodden stupor; letters to the editor scattered thickly over his shriveled person. The whole room reeked unmistakably of caffeine.

Tarb shrank back and twined both feet around Stet's. This time he did not repulse her. "But how can a—an educated, cultured man like Senbot Drosmig sink to such depths?"

"It's hard for anyone with even the slightest inclination toward the stuff to resist it here," Stet replied somberly. "I can't deny it; the sale of caffeine is absolutely unrestricted on Earth. Coffee shops all over the place. Coffee served freely at even the best homes. And not only coffee . . . caffeine is insiduously present in other of their popular beverages."

Her eyes bulged sideways. "But how can a so-called civilized people be so depraved?"

"Caffeine doesn't seem to affect them the way it does us. Their nervous systems are so very uncomplicated, one almost envies them."

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Drosmig stirred restlessly under his blanket of correspondence. "Go back . . . Fizbus," he muttered. "Warn you . . . 'fore . . . too late . . . like me."

Tarb's rose-pink feathers stood on end. She looked apprehensively at Stet.

"Senbot can't go back because he's in no shape to take the interstel drive." The young editor was obviously annoyed. "He's old and he's a physical wreck. But that certainly doesn't apply to you, Miss Morfatch." He looked long and hard into her eyes.

"Few years on planet," Drosmig groaned, struggling to his wings, "'ply to anybody."

His feathers, Tarb noticed, were an ugly, darkish brown. She had never seen any one that color before, but she'd heard rumors that too much caffeine could do that to you. At least she hoped it was only the caffeine.

"For your information, he was almost as bad as this when he came!" Stet snapped. "Frankly, that's why he was sent here—to get rid of his unfortunate addiction. Grupe had no idea, when he assigned him to Earth, that there was caffeine on the planet."

The old man gave a sardonic laugh as he clumsily made his way to the perch and gripped it with quivering toes.

"That is, I don't *think* he knew," Stet said dubiously.

Tarb reached over and picked a letter off the floor. The Fizbian characters were clumsy and ill-made, as if someone had formed them with his feet. Could there be such poverty here that individuals existed who could not afford a scripto? The letter didn't read like any that had ever been printed in the column—at least none that had been picked up in the Fizbus edition:

New York

Dear Senbot Drosmig:

I am a subaltern clerk in the shipping department of the Fizb-Earth Trading Company, Inc. Although I have held this post for only three months, I have already won the respect and esteem of my superiors through my diligence and good character. My habits are exemplary: I do not gamble, sing, or take caffeine.

Earlier today, while engaged in evening meditation at my modest apartments, I was aroused by a peremptory knock at the door. I flung it open. A native stood there with a small case in his hand.

"Is the house on fire?" I asked, wondering which of my few humble possessions I should rescue first.

"No," he said. "I would like to interest you in some brushes."

"Are the offices of the Fizb-

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Earth Trading Company, Inc., on fire?"

"Not to my knowledge," he replied, opening his case. "Now I have here a very nice hairbrush—"

I wanted to give him every chance. "Have you come to tell me of any disaster relative to the FizbEarth Trading Company, to myself, or to anyone or anything else with whom or with which I am connected?"

"Why, no," he said. "I have come to sell you brushes. Now here is a little number I know you'll like. My company developed it with you folks specially in mind. It's—"

"Do you know, sir, that you have wantonly interrupted me in the midst of my meditations, which constitutes an established act of privacy violation?"

"Is that a fact? Now this little item is particularly designed for brushing the wings—"

At that point, I knocked him down and punched him into insensibility with my feet. Then I summoned the police. To my surprise, they arrested me instead of him.

I am writing this letter from jail. I do not like to ask my employers to get me out because, even though I am innocent, you know how a thing like this can leave a smudge on the record.

What shall I do?

Anxiously yours,
Fruzmus Bloxx

"WHAT should he do?" Tarb asked, handing Stet the paper. "Or is the question academic by now? The letter's five days old."

Stet sighed. "I'll find out whether the consulate has been notified. Native police usually do that, you know. Very thoughtful fellows. If this Bloxx hasn't been bailed out already, I'll see that he is."

"But how will we answer his letter? Advise him to sue for false arrest?"

Stet smiled. "But he has no grounds for false arrest. He is guilty of assault. The native was entirely within his rights in trying to sell him a brush. Now—" he put out a foot— "brace yourself. Privacy violation is not a crime on Terra. It is perfectly legal. In fact, it does not exist as such!"

At that point, everything went maroon.

When Tarb came to, she found herself lying upon Drosmig's desk. A skin-faced native woman was offering her water and clucking.

"Are you all right, Tarb—Miss Morfatch?" Stet demanded anxiously.

"Yes. I—I think so," she murmured, raising herself to a crouch.

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"Better . . . have died," Drosmig groaned from his perch. "Fate worse . . . death . . . awaits you."

Tarb tried to smile. "Sorry to have been so much trouble." She stuck out her tongue at both Stet and the native.

The woman drew in her breath.

"Miss Morfatch," Stet reminded Tarb, "sticking out the tongue is not an apology on Terra; it is an insult. Fortunately, Miss Snow happens to be perhaps the only Terran who would not be offended. She has become thoroughly acquainted with us and our odd little customs. She even—" he beamed at the Terran female—"has learned to speak our language."

"Hail to thee, O visitor from the stars," Miss Snow said in Fizbian. "May thy sojourn upon Earth be an incessant delight and may peace and plenty shower their gifts in abundance upon thee."

Tarb put her hand to her aching head. "I'm very glad to meet you," she said, glad she did not have to get up to make the ritual *entrechats*.

"Miss Snow is my right foot," Stet said, "but I'm going to be noble and let her act as your secretary until you can learn to operate a typewriter."

"Secretary? Typewriter?"

"Well, you see, there are no scriptos or superscriptos on Earth and we can't import any from Home because the natives—" Miss Snow smiled —"don't have the right kind of power here to run psychic installations. All prosifying has to be done directly on prosifying machines or—" he paused —"by foot."

"Catch her!" Miss Snow exclaimed in Terran.

Everything had gone maroon for Tarb again. As she fell, she could hear a sodden thump. It was, she later discovered, Drosmig falling off his perch again—the result of insecure grip, she was given to understand, rather than excessive empathy.

"I didn't mean, of course, to give you the impression that we actually produce the individual copies of the papers ourselves," Stet explained over the dinner table that night. "We have native printers who do that. They've turned out some really remarkable Fizbian type fonts."

"Very clever of them," Tarb said, knowing that was what she was expected to say. She glanced around the restaurant. In their low-cut evening garments, the Terrestrial females looked much less Fizboid than they had during the day. All that naked-looking skin; one would think they'd want to cover it. Probably they were sick with jealousy of her

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beautiful rose-colored down—what they could see of it, anyway.

"Of course, our real problem is getting proofreaders. The proofing machines won't operate here either, of course, and so we need human personnel. But what Fizbian would do such degrading work? We had thought of convict labor, but—"

"Why mustn't I take off my wrap?" Tarb interrupted. "No one else is wearing one."

Stet coughed. "You'll feel much less self-conscious about your wings if you keep it on. And try not to use your feet so conspicuously. I'm sure everyone understands you need them to eat with, but—"

"But I'm not in the least self-conscious about my wings. On Fizbus, they were considered rather nice-looking, if I do say so myself."

"It's better," he said firmly, "not to emphasize the differences between the natives and ourselves. You didn't object to wearing a Terrestrial costume, did you?"

"No, I realize I must make some concessions to native prudery, but—"

"Matter of fact, I've been thinking it would be a good idea for you to wear a stole or a cape or something in the daytime when you go to and from the office. You wouldn't want to make yourself or the *Times* conspicuous, I'm sure . . . No, waiter, no coffee. We'll take champagne."

"I want to try coffee," Tarb said mutinously. "Champagne! You'd think I was a fledgling, giving me that bubbly stuff!"

He looked at her. "Now don't be silly, Miss Morfatch . . . Tarb. I can't let you indulge in such rash experiments. You realize I am responsible for you."

Tarb muttered darkly into her *coupe maison.*

Stet raised his eyebrows. "What did you say?"

"I was only wondering whether you'd remembered to check on whether that young man—Bloxx—ever did get out of jail."

Stet snapped his toes. "Glad you reminded me. Completely slipped my mind. Let's go and see what happened to him, shall we?"

AS they rose to leave, a dumpy Earthwoman rushed up to them, enthusiastically babbling in Terran. Seizing Tarb's foot, she clung to it before the Fizbian girl could do anything to prevent her. Tarb had to spread her wings wide to retain her balance. Her cloak flew off and an adjoining table of diners disappeared beneath it.

Stet and the headwaiter rushed to the rescue with profuse apolo-

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gies, Stet's crest undulating as if it concealed a nest of snakes. But Tarb was too much frightened to be calmed.

"Is this a hostile attack?" she shrieked frantically at Stet. "Because the handbook never said shaking feet was an Earth custom!"

"No, no, she's a friend!" Stet yelled, leaving the diners still struggling with the cloak as he sped back to her. "And shaking feet isn't an Earth custom; she thinks it's a Fizbian one. You see . . . Oh, hell, never mind—I'll explain the whole thing to you later. But she's just greeting you, trying to put you at your ease. It's Belinda Romney, a very important Terrestrial. She owns the Solar Press—you must have heard of it even on Fizbus—biggest news service on the planet. Absolutely wouldn't do to offend her. Mrs. Romney, may I present Miss Morfatch?"

The woman beamed and continued to gush endlessly.

"Tell her to let go my foot!" Tarb demanded. "It's getting so it feels carbonated."

He smiled deprecatingly. "Now, Tarb, we mustn't be rude—"

For the first time in her life, Tarb spoke Terran to a Terrestrial. She formed the words slowly and carefully: "Sorry we must leave, but we have to go to jail."

She looked to Stet for approval . . . and didn't get it. He started to explain something quickly to the woman. Every time she'd heard him speak Terran, Tarb thought, he seemed to be introducing, explaining or apologizing.

It turned out that, through some oversight, the usually

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thoughtful Terran police department had neglected to inform the Fizbian consul that one of his people had been incarcerated, for the young man had already been tried, found guilty of assault plus contempt of court, and sentenced to pay a large fine. However, after Stet had given his version of the circumstances to a sympathetic judge, the sum was reduced to a nominal one, which the *Times* paid.

"But I don't see why you should have paid anything at all," Bloxx protested ungrate-

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fully. "I didn't do anything wrong. You should have made an issue of it."

"According to Earth laws, you did do wrong," Stet said wearily, "and this is Earth. What's more, if we take the matter up, it will naturally get into print. You don't want your employers to hear about it, do you—even if you don't care about making Fizbians look ridiculous to Terrestrials?"

"I suppose I wouldn't like FizbEarth to find out," Bloxx conceded. "As it is, I'll have to do some fast explaining to account for my not having shown up for nearly a week. I'll say I caught some horrible Earth disease—that'll scare them so much, they'll probably beg me to take another week off. Though I do wish you fellows over at the *Times* would answer your mail sooner. I'm a regular subscriber, you know."

"BUT the same kind of thing's going to happen over and over again, isn't it, Stet?" Tarb asked as a taxi took them back to the hotel in which most of the *Times* staff was domiciled. "If privacy doesn't exist on Earth, it's bound to keep occurring."

"Eh?" Stet took his attention away from her toes with some difficulty. "Some Earth people like privacy, too, but they have to fight for it. Violations aren't legally punishable—that's the only difference."

"Then surely the Terrestrials would understand about us, wouldn't they?" she asked eagerly. "If they knew how strongly we felt about privacy, maybe they wouldn't violate it—not as much, anyway. I'm sure they're not vicious, just ignorant. And you can't just keep on getting Fizbians out of jail each time they run up against the problem. It would be too expensive, for one thing."

"Don't worry," he said, pressing her toes. "I'll take care of the whole thing."

"An article in the paper wouldn't really help much," she persisted thoughtfully, "and I suppose you must have run at least one already. It would explain to the Fizbians that Terrestrials don't regard invasion of privacy as a crime, but it wouldn't tell the Terrestrials that Fizbians do. We'll have to think of—"

"You're surely not going to tell me how to run my paper on your first day here, are you?"

He tried to take the sting out of his words by twining his toes around hers, but she felt guilty. She had been presumptuous. Probably there were lots of things she couldn't understand yet—like why she shouldn't polish her eyeballs in public. Stet had finally

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explained to her that, while Terrestrial women did make up in public, they didn't scour their irises, ever, and would be startled and horrified to see someone else doing so.

"But I was horrified to see them raking their feathers in public!" Tarb had contended.

"Combing their hair, my dear. And why not? This is their planet."

That was always his answer. *I wonder,* she speculated, *whether he would expect a Terrestrial visitor to Fizbus to fly . . . because, after all, Fizbus is our planet.* But she didn't dare broach the question.

However, if it was presumptuous of her to make helpful suggestions the first day, it was more than presumptuous of Stet to ask her up to his rooms to see his collection of rare early twentieth-century Terrestrial milk bottles and other antiques. So she just told him courteously that she was tired and wanted to go to roost. And, since the hotel had a whole section fitted up to suit Fizbian requirements, she spent a more comfortable night than she had expected.

She awoke the next day full of enthusiasm and ready to start in on the great work at once. Although she might have been a little too forward the previous night, she knew, as she took a reassuring glance in the mirror, that Stet would forgive her.

IN the office, she was, at first, somewhat self-conscious about Drosmig, who hung insecurely from his perch muttering to himself, but she soon forgot him in her preoccupation with duty. The first letter she picked up — although again oddly unlike the ones she'd read in the paper on Fizbus—seemed so simple that she felt she would have no difficulty in answering it all by herself:

Heidelberg

Dear Senbot Drosmig:

I am a professor of Fizbian History at a local university. Since my salary is a small one, owing to the small esteem in which the natives hold culture, I must economize wherever I can in order to make both ends meet. Accordingly, I do my own cooking and shop at the self-service supermarket around the corner, where I have found that prices are lower than in the service groceries and the food no worse.

However, the manager and a number of the customers have objected to my shopping with my feet. They don't so much mind my taking packages off the shelves with them, but they have been quite vociferous on the subject of my pinching the fruit with

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my toes. Unripe fruit, however, makes me ill. What shall I do?

Sincerely yours,

Grez B'Groot

Tarb dictated an unhesitating reply:

Dear Professor B'Groot:

Why don't you explain to the manager of the store that Fizbians have wings and feet rather than arms and hands?

I'm sure his attitude and the attitudes of his customers will change when they learn that your pinching the fruit with your feet is not mere pedagogical eccentricity, but the regular practice on our planet. Point out to him that your feet are covered and, therefore, more sanitary than the bare hands of his other customers.

And always put on clean socks before you go shopping.

Helpfully yours,

Senbot Drosmig

Miss Snow raised pale eyebrows.

"Is something wrong?" Tarb asked anxiously. "Should I have put in that bit about work, study, meditate? It seems inappropriate somehow."

"Oh, no, not that. It's just that your letter—well, violates Mr. Zarnon's precept that, in Rome, one must do as the Romans do."

"But this isn't Rome," Tarb replied, bewildered. "It's New York."

"He didn't make the saying up," Miss Snow replied testily. "It's a Terrestrial proverb."

"Oh," Tarb said.

SHE resented this creature's trying to tell her how to do her job. On the other hand, Tarb was wise enough to realize that Miss Snow, unpleasant though she might be, probably did know Stet well enough to be able to predict his reactions.

So Tarb not only was reluctant to show Stet what she had already done, but hesitated about answering another and even more urgent letter that had just been brought in by special messenger. She tried to compromise by submitting the letters to Drosmig—for, technically speaking, it was he who was her immediate superior—but he merely groaned, "Tell 'em all to drop dead," from his perch and refused to open his eyes.

In the end, Tarb had to take the letters to Stet's office. Miss Snow trailed along behind her, uninvited. And, since this was a place of business, Tarb could not claim a privacy violation. Even if it weren't a place of business, she remembered, she couldn't—not here on Earth. Advanced spirituality, hah!

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Advanced pain in the pinions!

Stet read the first letter and her answer smilingly. "Excellent, Tarb—" her hearts leaped—"for a first try, but I'd like to suggest a few changes, if I may."

"Well, of course," she said, pretending not to notice the smirk on Miss Snow's face.

"Just write this Professor B'Goot that he should do his shopping at a grocery that offers service and practice his economies elsewhere. A professor, of all people, is expected to uphold the dignity of his own race—the idea, sneering at a culture that was thousands of years old when we were still building nests! Terrestrials couldn't possibly have any respect for him if they saw him prodding kumquats with his toes."

"It's no sillier than writing with one's vestigial wings!" Tarb blazed.

"Well!" Miss Snow exclaimed in Terran. "Well, *really*!"

Tarb started to stick out her tongue, then remembered. "I didn't mean to offend you, Miss Snow. I know it's your custom. But wouldn't you understand if I typewrote with my feet?"

Miss Snow tittered.

"If you want the honest truth, hon, it would make you look like a feathered monkey."

"If you want the honest truth about what you look like to me, dearie—it's a plucked chicken!"

"Tarb, I think you should apologize to Miss Snow!"

"All right!" Tarb stuck out her tongue. Miss Snow promptly thrust out hers in return.

"Ladies, ladies!" Stet cried. "I think there has been a slight confusion of folkways!" He quickly changed the subject. "Is that another letter you have there, Tarb?"

"Yes, but I didn't try to answer it. I thought you'd better have a look at it first, since Miss Snow didn't seem to think much of the job I did with the other one."

"Miss Snow always has the *Times*' welfare at heart," Stet remarked ambiguously, and read:

Chicago

Dear Senbot Drosmig:

I am employed as translator by the extraterrestrial division of Burns and Deerhart, Inc., the well-known interstellar mail-order house. As the company employs no other Fizbians and our offices are situated in a small rural community where no others of our race reside, I find myself rather lonely. Moreover, being a bachelor, with neither chick nor child on Fizbus, I have nothing to look forward to upon my return to the Home Planet some day.

Accordingly, I decided to adopt a child to cheer my declining

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years. I dispatched an interstellargram to a reliable orphanage on Fizbus, outlining my hopes and requirements in some detail. After they had satisfied themselves as to my income, strength of character, etc., they sent me a fatherless and motherless egg in cold storage, which I was supposed to hatch upon arrival.

However, when the egg came to Earth, it was impounded by Customs. They say it is forbidden to import extrasolar eggs. I have tried to explain to them that it is not at all a question of importation but of adoption; however, they cannot or will not understand.

Please tell me what to do. I fear that they may not be keeping the egg at the correct Fizbian freezing point—which, as you know, is a good deal lower than Earth's. The fledgling may hatch by itself and receive a traumatic shock that might very well damage its entire psyche permanently.

Frantically yours,
Glibmus Gluyt

"Oh, for the stars' sake!" Stet exploded. "This is really too much! Viz our consul, Miss Snow. That egg must go back to Fizbus at once, before any Terrestrials hear of it! And I must notify the government back on the Home Planet to keep a close check on all egg shipments. Something like this must certainly not occur again."

"Why shouldn't the Terrestrials hear of it?" Tarb asked, outraged. "And I think it's mean of you to send back a poor little orphan egg like that when it has a chance of getting a good home."

"An egg!" Miss Snow repeated incredulously. "You mean you really . . . ?" She gave me one mad little hoot of laughter and then stopped and strangled slightly. Her face turned purple in her efforts to restrain mirth. *Really,* Tarb thought, *she looks so much better that color.*

STET'S crest twitched violently. "I hope—" he began. "I do hope you will keep this . . . knowledge to yourself, Miss Snow."

"But of course," she assured him, calming down. "I'm dreadfully sorry I was so rude. Naturally I wouldn't dream of telling a soul, Mr. Zarnon. You can trust me."

"I'm sure I can, Miss Snow."

Tarb almost choked with indignation. "You mean you've been keeping the facts of our life from Terrestrials? As if they were fledglings . . . no, even fledglings are told these days."

"One could hardly blame him for it, Miss Morfatch," Miss Snow said. "You wouldn't want people to know that Fizbians laid eggs, would you?"

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"And why not?"

"Tarb," Stet intervened, "you don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh, don't I? You're ashamed of the fact that we bear our children in a clean, decent, honorable way instead of—" She stopped. "I'm being as bad as you two are. Probably the Terrestrials' way of reproduction doesn't seem dirty to them—but, since they do reproduce *that* way, they could scarcely find *our* way objectionable!"

"Tarb, that's not how a young girl should talk!"

"Oh, go lay an egg!" she said, knowing that she had overstepped the limits of propriety, but unable to let him get away with that. "I hope to be a wife and mother some day," she added, "and I only hope that when that time comes, I'll be able to lay good eggs."

"Miss Morfatch," Stet said, keeping control of his temper with a visible effort, "that will be enough from you. If common decency doesn't restrain you, please remember that I am your employer and that *I* set the policies on *my* paper. You'll do what you're told and keep a civil tongue in your head or you'll be sent back to Fizbus. Do I make myself clear?"

"You do, indeed," Tarb said. How could she ever have thought he was charming and handsome? Well, perhaps he still was handsome, but fine feathers do not make fine deeds. And, if it came to that, it wasn't his paper.

"We have the same thing on Terra," Miss Snow murmured sympathetically to Stet. "These young whippersnappers think they can start in running the paper the very first day. Why, Belinda Romney herself—she's a distant cousin of mine, you know—told me—"

"Miss Snow," Tarb said, "I hope for the sake of Earth that you are not a typical example of the Terrestrial species."

"And you, hon," Miss Snow retorted, "don't belong on a paper, but in a chicken coop."

"Ladies!" Stet said helplessly. "Women," he muttered, "certainly do not belong on a newspaper. Matter of fact, they don't belong anywhere; their place is in the home only because there's nowhere else to put them."

Both females glared at him.

DURING the next fortnight, Tarb gained fluency in Terran and also learned to operate a Terrestrial typewriter equipped with Fizbian type—mostly so that she could dispense with the services of the invaluable Miss Snow. She didn't like typing, though—it chipped her toenails and her temper. Besides, Drosmig kept

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complaining that the noise prevented him from sleeping and she preferred him to sleep rather than hang there making irrelevant and, sometimes, unpleasantly relevant remarks.

"Longing for the old scripto, eh?" one of the cameramen smiled as he lounged in the open doorway of her office. Although she was fond of fresh air, Tarb realized that she would have to keep the door shut from now on. Too many of the younger members of the staff kept booing at her as they passed, and now they had formed the habit of dropping in to offer her advice, encouragement and invitations to meals. At first, the attention had pleased her—but now she was much too busy to be bothered; she was going to turn out acceptable answers to those letters or die trying.

"Well, if the power can't be converted, it can't," she said grimly. "Griblo, I do wish you'd be a dear and flutter off. I—"

He snorted. "Who says the power can't be converted? Stet, huh?"

She took her feet off the keys and looked at him. "Why do you say 'Stet' that way?"

"Because that's a lot of birdseed he gives you about not being able to convert Earth power. Could be done all right, but he and the consul have it all fixed up to keep Fizbian technology off the planet. Consul's probably being paid off by the International Association of Manufacturers and Stet's in it for the preservation of indigenous culture—and maybe a little cash, too. After all, those rare antique collections of his cost money."

"I don't believe it!" Tarb snapped. "Griblo, please—I have so much work to get through!"

"Okay, chick, but I warn you, you're going to have your bright-eyed illusions shattered. Why don't you wake up to the truth about Stet? What you should do is maybe eschew the society of all journalists entirely, and a sordid lot they are, and devote yourself to photographers—splendid fellows, all."

"Please shut the door behind you!"

The door slammed.

Tarb gazed disconsolately at the letter before her. Would she ever be able to answer letters to Stet's satisfaction? The purpose of the whole column was service—but did she and Stet mean the same thing by the same word? Or, if they did, whom was Stet serving?

She was paying too much attention to Griblo's idle remarks. Obviously he was a sorehead—had some kind of grudge against Stet. Perhaps Stet was a bit too autocratic, perhaps he had even gone native to some extent, but

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you couldn't say anything worse about him than that. All in all, he wasn't a bad bird and she mustn't let herself be influenced by rumormongers like Griblo.

TARB got up and took the letter to Stet. He was in his office dictating to Miss Snow. *After all,* Tarb could not repress the ugly thought, *why should he care about the scriptos? He'll never have to use a typewriter.*

And he was perfectly nice about being interrupted. The only thing he didn't like was being contradicted. *I'm getting bitter,* she told herself in surprise. *And at my age, too. I wonder what I'll be like when I'm old.*

This thought alarmed her and so she smiled very sweetly at Stet as she murmured, "Would you mind reading this?" and gave him the letter.

"Run into another little snag, eh?" he said affably, giving her foot a gentle pat with his. "Well, let's see what we can do about it."

Montreal

Dear Senbot Drosmig:

I am a chef at the Cafe Interstellaire, which, as everyone knows, is one of the most chic eating establishments on this not very chic planet. During my spare moments, I am a great amateur of the local form of entertainment known as television. I am especially fascinated by the native actress Ingeborg Swedenborg, who, in spite of being a Terran, compares most favorably with our own Fizbian footlight favorites.

The other day, while I am in the kitchen engaged in preparing the ragout celeste à la fizbe *for which I am justly celebrated on nine planets, I hear a stir outside in the dining room. I strain my ears. I hear the cry, "It is Ingeborg Swedenborg!"*

I cannot help myself. I rush to the doorway. There, behold, the incomparable Ingeborg herself! She follows the headwaiter to a choice table. She is even more ravishing in real life than on the screen. On her, it does not matter that she has no feathers save on the head—even skin looks good. Overcome by involuntary ardor, I boo at her. Whereupon I am violently assailed by a powerfully built native whom I have not previously noticed to be escorting her.

I am rescued before he can do me any permanent damage, though, if you wish the truth, it will be a long time before I can fly again. However, I am given notice by the cold-hearted management. Now I am without a job. And what is more, if on this planet one is not permitted to express one's instinctive and natural admiration for a beautiful wo-

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man, then all I have to say is that it is a lousy planet and I wiggle my toes at it. How do I go about getting deported?

Impatiently yours,
Rajois Sludd

"OH, I suppose it serves him right," Tarb said quickly, before Stet could comment, "but don't you think it would be a good idea if the *Times* got up a Fizbian-Terrestrial handbook of its own? It's the only solution that I can see. The regular one, I recognize now, is more than inadequate, with all that spiritual gup—" Miss Snow drew in her breath sharply—"and not much else. All these problems are bound to arise again and again. Frankly speaking, Stet, your solutions only take care of the individual cases; they don't establish a sound intercultural basis."

He grunted.

"What's more," she went on eagerly, "we could not only give copies to every Fizbian planning to visit Earth, but also print copies in Terran for Terrestrials who are interested in learning more about Fizbus and the Fizbians. In fact, all Terrans who come in contact with us should have the book. It would help both races to understand each other so much better and—"

"Unnecessary!" Stet snapped, so violently that she stopped with her mouth open. "The standard handbook is more than adequate. Whatever limitations it may have are deliberate. Setting down in cold print all that . . . stuff you want to have included would make a point of things we prefer not to stress. I wouldn't want to have the Terrestrials humor me as if I were a fledgling or a foreigner."

He leaped out of his chair and paced up and down the office. One would think he had forgotten he ever could fly.

"But you are a foreigner, Stet," Tarb said gently. "No matter what you do or say, Terrestrials and Fizbians are—well, worlds apart."

"Spiritually, I am much closer to the Terrestrials than—but you wouldn't understand." He and Miss Snow nodded sympathetically at each other. "And you might be interested to know that I happen to be the author of all that 'spiritual gup.' I wrote the handbook—as a service to Fizbus, I might point out. I wasn't paid for it."

"Oh, dear!" Tarb said. "Oh, *dear!* I really and truly am sorry, Stet."

HE brushed her apologies aside. "Answer that letter. Ignore the question about deportation entirely." He ran a foot through his crest. "Just tell the fellow to

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see our personnel manager. We could use a chef in the company dining room. Haven't tasted a decent celestial ragout—at a price I could afford—since I left Fizbus."

"Would you want me to print that reply in the column?" she asked. " 'If you lose your job because you're unfamiliar with Terrestrial customs, come to the *Times*. We'll give you another job at a much lower salary.' "

"Of course not! Send your answer directly to him. You don't think we put any of those letters you've been answering in the column, do you? Or any that come in at all, for that matter. I have to write all the letters that are printed—and answer them myself."

"I should have recognized the style," Tarb said. "So this is the service the *Times* offers to its subscribers. Nothing that would be of help. Nothing that could prevent other Fizbians from making the same mistake. Nothing that could be controversial. Nothing that would help Terréstrials to understand us. Nothing, in short, but a lot of birdseed!"

"Impertinence!" Miss Snow remarked. "You shouldn't let her talk to you like that, Mr. Zarnon."

"Tarb!" Stet roared, casting an impatient glance at Miss Snow. "How dare you talk to me in that way? And all this is none of your business, anyway."

"I'm a Fizbian," she stated, "and it certainly is my business. I'm not ashamed of having wings. I'm proud of them and sorry for people who don't have them. And, by the stars, I'm going to fly. If skirts are improper to wear for flying, then I can wear slacks. I saw them in a Terrestrial fashion magazine and they're perfectly respectable."

"Not for working hours," Miss Snow sniffed.

"I have no intention of flying during working hours," Tarb snapped back. "Even you should be able to see that the ceiling's much too low."

Stet ran a foot through his crest again. "I hate to say this, Tarb, but I don't feel you're the right person for this job. You mean well, I'm sure, but you're too—too inflexible."

"You mean I have principles," she retorted, "and you don't." Which wasn't entirely true; he had principles—it was just that they were unprincipled.

"That will be enough, Tarb," he said sternly. "You'd better go now while I think this over. I'd hate to send you back to Fizbus, because I'd—well, I'd miss you. On the other hand . . ."

Tarb went back to her office and drafted a long interstel to a cousin on Fizbus, explaining what she would like for a birthday

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present. "And send it special delivery," she concluded, "because I am having an urgent and early birthday."

"TARB Morfatch!" Stet howled, a few months later. "What on Earth are you doing?"

"Dictating into my scripto," Tarb said cheerfully. "Some of the boys from the print shop helped fix it up for me. They were very nice about it, too, considering that the superscriptos will probably throw them out of work. You know, Stet, Terrestrials can be quite decent people."

"Where did you get that scripto?"

"Cousin Mylfis sent it to me for my birthday. I must have complained about wearing out my claws on a typewriter and he didn't understand that scriptos won't work on Earth. Only they do." She beamed at her employer. "All it needed was a transformer. I guess you're just not mechanically minded, Stet."

He clenched his feet. "Tarb, Terrestrials aren't ready for our technology. You've done a very unwise thing in having that scripto sent to you. And I've done a very unwise thing in keeping you here against my better judgment."

"Maybe the Terrestrials aren't ready," she said, ignoring his last remark, "but I'm not going to wear my feet to the bone if I can get a gadget that'll do the same thing with no expenditure of physical energy." She placed a foot on his. "I don't see how a thing like this could possibly corrupt the Terrestrials, Stet. It's made a better, brighter girl out of me already."

"Hear, hear!" said Drosmig hoarsely from his perch.

"Shut up, Senbot. You just don't understand, Tarb. If you'll only—"

"But I'm afraid I do understand, Stet. And I won't send my scripto back."

"May I come in?" Miss Snow tapped lightly on the door frame. "Is what I hear true?"

"About the scripto?" Tarb asked. "It certainly is. All you have to do is talk into it and the words appear on the paper. Guess that makes you obsolete, doesn't it, Miss Snow?"

"And high time, too," commented Drosmig. "Never liked the old biddy."

"Senbot . . ." Stet began, and stopped. "Oh, what's the use trying to talk reasonably to either of you! Tarb, come back to my office with me."

She could not refuse and so she followed. Miss Snow, torn between curiosity and the scripto, hesitated and then made after them.

"I've decided to take you off

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the column—for this morning, anyway—and send you on an outside assignment," Stet told Tarb. "The consul's wife is coming to Earth today. Once she heard there was another woman on Terra, nothing could stop her. Consul seems to think it's my fault, too," he added moodily. "Won't believe I had nothing to do with hiring you. I told the Home Office not to send a woman, that she'd disrupt the office, and you sure as hell have."

"But I thought you said in your letters that you were doing everything in your power to bring Fizbian womenfolk to their men on Terra!" Tarb pointed out malevolently.

"YES," he confessed. "We must please our readers. You know that. Anyway, all that's irrelevant right now. What I want you to do is go meet the consul's wife. Nice touch, having the only other Fizbian woman here be the one to interview her. Human interest angle for the Terrestrial papers. Shouldn't be surprised if Solar Press picked it up—they like items of that kind for fillers. Take Griblo along with you and make sure he has film in his camera this time."

"Yes, sir," Tarb said. "Anything you say, sir."

He pretended not to notice her sarcasm. "I have a list of the questions you should ask her." He fixed her with his eye. "You stick to them, do you hear me? I don't want anything controversial." He rummaged among the papers on his desk. "I know I had it half an hour ago. Sit down, will you, Tarb? Stop hopping around."

"If I can't have a perch, I want a stool," Tarb said. "This is a private office and I think it's a gross affectation for you to have those silly, uncomfortable chairs in it."

"If you would have your wings clipped like Mr. Zarnon's—" Miss Snow began before Stet could stop her.

"Stet, you *didn't*!"

His crest thrashed back and forth. "They'll grow back again and it's so much more convenient this way. After all, I can't use them here and I do have to associate with Terrestrials and use their equipment. The consul has had his wings clipped also and so have several of our more prominent industrialists—"

"Oh, *Stet*!" Tarb wailed. "I was beginning to think some pretty hard things about you, but I wouldn't ever have dreamed you'd do anything as awful as that!"

"Why should I have to apologize to you?" he raged. "Who do you think you are, anyway? You're an incompetent little fool.

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I should have fired you that first day. I've let you get away with so much only because you have a pretty face. You've only been on Earth a couple of months; how can you presume to think you know what's good and what's bad for the Fizbians here?"

"I may not know what's good," she retorted, "but I certainly do know what's bad. And that's you, Stet—you and everything you stand for. You not only don't have the courage of your convictions, you don't even have any convictions. You're ashamed of being a Fizbian, ashamed of anything that makes Fizbians different from Terrestrials, even if it's something better, something that most Terrans would like to have. You're a damned hypocrite, Stet Zarnon, that's what you are—professing to help our people when actually you're hurting them by trying to force them into the mold of an alien species."

She brushed back her crest. "I take it I'm fired," she said more quietly. "Do you want me to interview the consul's wife first or leave right away?"

It took Stet a moment to bring his voice under control. "Interview her first. We'll talk this over when you get back."

IT was pleasant to be away from the office, she thought as the taxi pulled toward the airfield, and doing wingwork again, even if it proved to be the first and last time on this planet. Griblo sat hunched in a corner of the seat, too preoccupied with the camera, which, even after two years, he hadn't fully mastered, to pay attention to her.

Outside, it was raining, the kind of thin drizzle that, on Fizbus or Earth, could go on for days. Tarb had brought along the native umbrella she had purchased in the hotel gift shop—a delightful contraption that was supposed to keep off the rain and didn't, and was supposed to collapse and did, but at the wrong moments. She planned to take it back with her when she returned to Fizbus. Approved souvenir or not, it was the same beautiful purple as her eyes. And, besides, who had made the ruling about approved souvenirs? Stet, of course.

"No reason why we couldn't have autofax brought from Home," Griblo suddenly grumbled.

Tarb pulled herself back from her thoughts. "I suppose Stet wouldn't let you," she said. "But now that one scripto's here," she went on somewhat complacently, "he'll have to—"

"Keep this planet charming and unspoiled, he says," Griblo interrupted ungratefully. "Its spiritual values will be corrupted by too

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much contact with a crass advanced technology. And, of course, he's got the local camera manufacturers solidly behind him. I wonder whether they advertise in the *Times* because he helps keep autofax off Terra or whether he keeps the autofax off Terra because they advertise in the *Times*."

"But what does he care about advertising? He may talk as if he owned the *Times*, but he doesn't."

Griblo gave a nasty laugh. "No, he doesn't, but if the Terran edition didn't show a profit, it'd fold quicker than you can flip your wings and he'd have to go back to nasty old up-to-date Fizbus as a lowly sub-editor. And he wouldn't like that one bit. Our Stet, as you may have noticed, is fond of running things to suit himself."

"But Mr. Grupe told me that the *Times* isn't interested in money. It's running this edition of the paper only as a service to —oh, I suppose all that was a lot of birdseed, too!"

"Grupe!" Griblo snorted. "The sanctimonious old buzzard! He's a big stockholder on the paper. Bet you didn't know that, did you? All they're out for is money. Fizbian money, Terrestrial money —so long as it's cash."

"Tell me, Griblo," Tarb asked, "what does 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do' mean?"

Griblo grinned sourly. "Stet's favorite motto." He moved along the seat closer to her. "I'll tell you what it means, chicken. When on Earth, don't be a Fizbian."

THE consul's wife, an old mauve creature, did not seem overpleased to see Tarb, since the younger, prettier Fizbian definitely took the spotlight away from her. The press had, of course, seen Tarb before, but at that time they hadn't been able to communicate directly with her and they didn't, she now found out, think nearly as much of Stet as he did of them.

Tarb couldn't attempt to deviate much from Stet's questions, for the consul's wife was not very cooperative and the consul himself watched both women narrowly. He was a good friend of Stet's, Tarb knew, and apparently Stet had taken the other man into his confidence.

When the interviews were over and the consular party had left, Tarb remained to chat with the Terrestrial journalists. Despite Griblo's worried objections, she joined them in the Moonfield Restaurant, where she daringly partook of a cup of coffee and then another and another.

After that, things weren't very clear. She dimly remembered the other reporters assuring her that

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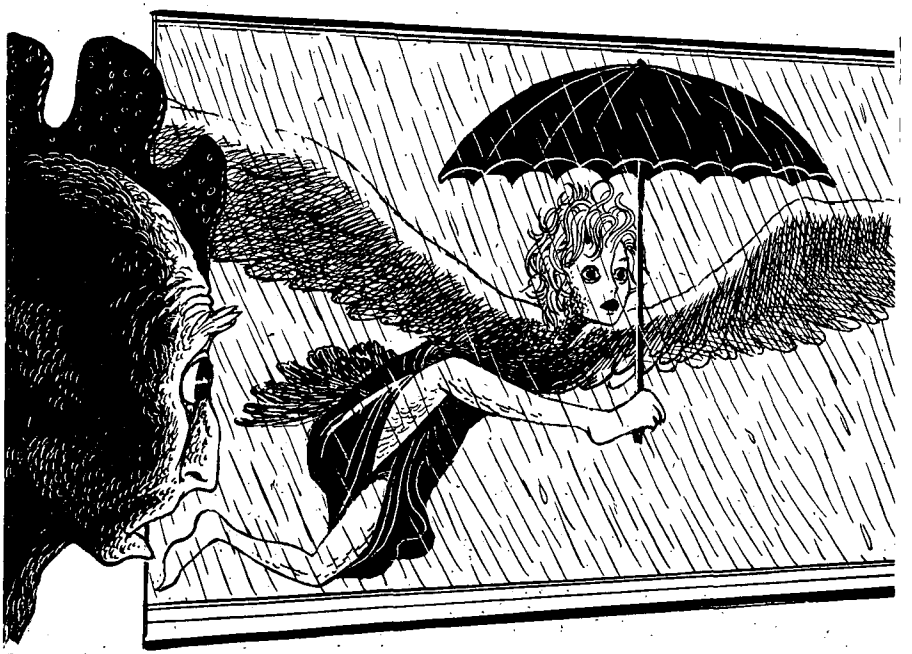

she shouldn't disfigure her lovely wings with a stole . . . and then pirouetting in the air over the bar to prolonged applause . . . and then she was in the taxi again with Griblo shaking her.

"Wake up, Tarb—we're almost at the office! Stet'll have me plucked for this!"

Tarb sat up and pushed her crest out of her eyes. The sky was growing dark. They must have been gone a long time.

"I'll never hear the end of this," Griblo moaned. "Why, if only he could get someone to fill my place, Stet would fire me like a shot! Not that I wouldn't quit if I could get another job."

"Oh, it'll be mostly me he'll be mad at." Tarb pulled out her compact. Stet had warned her not to polish her eyeballs in public, but the ground with him! Her head hurt. And her feathers, she saw in the mirror, had turned almost beige. She looked horrible. She felt horrible. And Stet would probably think she was horrible.

"When Stet's mad," Griblo prophesied darkly, "he's mad at *everybody*!"

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And Stet *was* mad. He was waiting in the newsroom, his emerald-blue eyes blazing as if he had not only polished but lacquered them.

"WHAT'S the idea of taking six hours to cover a simple story!" he shouted as soon as the door began to open. "Aside from the trivial matter of a deadline to be met—Griblo, *where's Tarb?* Nothing's happened to her, has it?"

"Naaah," Griblo said, unslinging his camera. "She took a short cut, only she got held up by a terrace. Snagged her umbrella on it, I believe. I heard her yelling when I was waiting for the elevator; I didn't know nice girls knew language like that. She should be up any minute now . . . There she is."

He pointed to a window, through which the lissome form of the young feature writer could be seen, tapping on the glass in order to attract attention.

"Somebody better open it for her," the cameraman suggested. "Probably not meant to open

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from the outside. Not many people come in that way, I guess."

OPEN-MOUTHED, the whole newsroom stared at the window. Finally the Copy Editor got up and let a dripping Tarb in.

"Nearly thought I wouldn't make it," she observed, shaking herself in a flurry of wet pink feathers. The rest of the staff ducked, most of them too late. "Umbrella didn't do much good," she continued, closing it. It left a little puddle on the rug. "My wings got soaked right away." She tossed her wet crest out of her eyes. "Golly, but it's good to fly again. Haven't done it for months, but it seems like years." Her eye caught Miss Snow's. "You don't know what you're missing!"

"Tarb," Stet thundered, "you've been drinking coffee! *Griblo*!" But the cameraman had nimbly sought sanctuary in the darkroom.

"You'd better go home, Tarb." When Stet's eye tufts met across his nose, he was downright ugly, she realized. "Griblo can give me the dope and I'll write up the story myself. I can fill it out with canned copy. And you and I will discuss this situation in the morning."

"Won't go home when there's work to be done. Duty calls me." Giving a brief and quite recognizable imitation of a Terrestrial trumpet, Tarb stalked down the corridor to her office.

Drosmig looked up from his perch, to which he was still miraculously clinging at that hour. "So it got you, too? . . . Sorry . . . nice girl."

"It hasn't got me," Tarb replied, picking up a letter marked *Urgent*. "I've got it." She scanned the letter, then made hastily for Stet's office.

He sat drumming on his desk with the antique stainless steel spatula he used as a paperknife.

"Read this!" she demanded, thrusting the letter into his face. "Read this, you traitor—sacrificing our whole civilization to what's most expedient for you! Hypocrite! Cad!"

"Tarb, listen to me! I'm—"

"Read it!" She slapped the letter down in front of him. "Read it and see what you've done to us! Sure, we Fizbians keep to ourselves and so the only people who know anything about us are the ones who want to sell us brushes, while the people who want to help us don't know a damn thing about us and—"

"Oh, all right! I'll read it if you'll only keep quiet!" He turned the letter right-side up.

Johannesburg

Dear Senbot Drosmig:

I represent the Dzoglian Publishing Company, Inc., of which

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I know you have heard, since your paper has seen fit to give our books some of the most unjust reviews on record. However, be that as it may, I have opened an office on Earth with the laudable purpose of effecting an interchange of respective literatures, to see which Terrestrial books might most profitably be translated into Fizbian, and which of the authors on our own list might have potential appeal for the Earth reader.

Dealing with authors is, of course, a nerve-racking business and I soon found myself in dire need of mental treatment. What was my horror to find that this primitive, although charming, planet had no neurotones, no psychoscopes, not even any cerebrophones—in fact, no psychiatric machines at all! The very knowledge of this brought me several degrees closer to a breakdown.

Perhaps I should have consulted you at this juncture, but I admit I was a bit of a snob. "What sort of advice can a mere journalist give me," I thought, "that I could not give myself?" So, more for amusement than anything else, I determined to consult a native practitioner. "After all," I said to myself, "a good laugh is a step forward on the road to recovery."

Accordingly, I went to see this native fellow. They work entirely without machines, I understand, using something like witchcraft. At the same time, I thought I might pick up some material for a jolly little book on primitive customs which I could get some unknown writer to throw together inexpensively. Strong human interest items like that always have great reader-appeal.

The native chap—doctor, he calls himself—was most cordial, which he should have been at the price I was paying him. One thing I must say about these natives—backward they may be, but they have a very shrewd commercial sense. You can't even imagine the trouble I had getting those authors to sign even remotely reasonable contracts . . . which in part accounts for my mental disturbance, I suppose.

Well, anyway, I handed the native a privacy waiver carefully filled out in Terran. He took it, smiled and said, "We'll discuss this afterward. My contact lenses have disappeared; I suppose one of my patients has stolen them again. Can't see a thing without them."

So we sat down and had a bit of a chat. He seemed remarkably intelligent for a native; never interrupted me once.

"You are definitely in great trouble," he told me when I'd finished. "You need to be psychoanalyzed."

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"Good, good," I said. "I see I've come to the right shop."

"Now just lie down and make yourself comfortable."

"Lie down?" I repeated, puzzled. I have an excellent command of Terran, but every now and then an idiom will throw me. "I tell the truth, sir, and when I am required by force of circumstances to lie, I lie up."

"No," he said, "not that kind of lying. You know, the kind you do at night when you go to sleep."

"Oh, I get you," I said idiomatically. Without further ado, I flung off my ulster and flew up to a thingummy hanging from the ceiling—chandelier, I believe, is the native term—flipped upside down, and hung from it by my toes. Wasn't the Presidential Perch, by any means, but it wasn't bad at all. "What do I do next?" I inquired affably.

"My dear fellow," the chap said, whipping out a notebook from the recesses of his costume, "how long have you had this delusion that you are a bird—or is it a bat?"

"Sir," I said as haughtily as my position permitted, "I am neither a bird nor a bat. I am a Fizbian. Surely you have heard of Fizbians?"

"Yes, yes, of course. They come from another country or planet or something. Frankly, politics is a bit outside my sphere. All I'm interested in is people—and Fizbians are people, aren't they?"

"Yes, certainly. If anything, it's you who . . . Yes, they are people."

"Well, tell me then, Mr. Liznig, when was it you first started thinking you were a bat or a bird?"

I tried to control myself. "I am neither a bird nor a bat! I am a Fizbian! I have wings! See?" I fluttered them.

He peered at me. "I wish I could," he said regretfully. "Without my glasses, though, I'm as blind as a bat—or a bird."

Well, the long and the short of it is that the natives are planning to certify me as insane and incarcerate me, pending the doctor's decision as to whether my delusion is that I am a bird or a bat. They are using my privacy waiver as commitment papers.

Save me, Senbot Drosmig, for I feel that if I have to wait for the doctor's glasses to be delivered, I shall indeed go mad.

Distractedly yours,
Tgos Liznig

"I'LL handle this myself," Stet said crisply. "I'll tell the consul to advise the Terran State Department that this man should be deported as an undesirable alien. That'll solve the problem neatly. We can't have this contaminating the pure stream of

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Terrestrial literature with—"

"But aren't you going to explain to them that he's perfectly sane?" Tarb gasped.

"No need to bother. He'll be grateful enough to get off the planet. Besides, how do I know he is perfectly sane?"

"Stet Zarnon, you're perfectly horrid!"

"And you, Tarb Morfatch, are disgustingly drunk. Now you go right home and sleep it off. I know I was too harsh with you—my fault for letting you go out alone with Griblo in the first place when you've been here only a few months. Might have known those Terran journalists would lead you astray. Nice fellows, but irresponsible." He flicked out his tongue. "There, I've apologized. Now will you go home?"

"Home!" Tarb shrieked. "Home when there's work to be done and—"

"—and you're not going to be the one to do it. Tarb," he said, attempting to seize her foot, which she pulled away, "I was going to tell you tomorrow, but you might as well know tonight. I've taken you off the column for good. I have a better job for you."

She looked at him. "A better job? Are you being sarcastic? What as?"

"As my wife." He got up and came over to her. She stood still, almost stunned. "That solves the whole problem tidily. An office is no place for you, darling—you're really a simple home-girl at heart. Newspaper work is too strenuous for you; it upsets you and makes you nervous and irritable. I want you to stay home and take care of our house and hatch our eggs—unostentatiously, of course."

"Why, you—" she spluttered.

He put his foot over her mouth. "Don't give me your answer now. You're in no condition to think. Tell me tomorrow."

IT rained all night and continued on into the morning. Tarb's head ached, but she had to make an appearance at the office. First she vizzed an acquaintance she had made the day before; then she took her umbrella and set forth.

As she kicked open the door to the newsroom, all sound ceased. Voices stopped abruptly. Typewriters halted in mid-click. Even the roar of the presses downstairs suddenly seemed to mute. Every head turned to look at Tarb.

Humph, she thought, removing her plastic oversocks, *so suppose I was a little oblique yesterday. They needn't stare at me. They never stare at Drosmig. Just because I'm a woman, I suppose!* The gate crashed loudly behind her.

"Oh, Miss Morfatch," Miss

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Snow called. "Mr. Zarnon said he wanted to see you as soon as you came in. It's urgent." And she giggled.

"Really?" Tarb said. "Well, he'll just have to wait until I've wrung out my wings." Sooner or later, she would have to face Stet, but she wanted to put it off as long as possible.

She opened the door to her office and halted in amazement. For, seated on a stool behind the desk, haggard but vertical, was Senbot Drosmig, busily reading letters and blue-penciling comments on them with his feet.

"Good morning, my dear," he said, giving her a wan smile. "Surprised to see me functioning again, eh?"

"Well—yes." She opened her dripping umbrella mechanically and stood it in a corner. "How—"

"I realized last night that all that happened to you was my fault. You were my responsibility and I failed you."

"Oh, don't be melodramatic, Senbot. I wasn't your responsibility and you didn't fail me. Not that I'm not glad to see you up and doing again, but—"

"But I did fail you!" the aged journalist insisted. "And, in the same way, I failed my people. I shouldn't have given in. I should have fought Zarnon as you, my dear, tried to do. But it isn't too late!" The fire of the crusader lit up in his watery old eyes. "I can still fight him and his sacred crows—his Earthlings! If I have to, I can go over his head to Grupe. Grupe may not understand Stet's moral failings, but he certainly will comprehend his commercial ones. Grupe owns stock in other Fizbian enterprises besides the *Times*. Autofax, for example."

"Oh, Senbot!" Tarb wailed. "The whole thing's such an awful mess!"

"I DON'T think it'll be necessary to threaten that far," he comforted her. "Stet is no fool. He knows which side of his breadnut is peeled."

"I'm sure you'll do a wonderful job," she exclaimed, impulsively giving a ritual *entrechat*. "And I wish I could stay and help you, but . . ."

"I know, my dear."

"You do?" She was puzzled. "But how did the news get around so quickly?"

He shrugged. "The Terrestrial grapevine is almost as efficient as the Fizbian. Didn't you notice any change in the—ah—atmosphere when you came in?"

"Oh, was that the reason?" Tarb laughed merrily. "Somehow it never occurred to me that they could have heard so soon."

"But the morning editions have been out for hours."

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THE door to the office was flung open. Stet stormed in, bristling with a most unloverlike rage.

"Miss Morfatch—" he waved a crumpled copy of the *Terrestrial Tribune* at her—"when I give an order, I expect to be obeyed! Didn't Miss Snow tell you to report directly to my office the instant you came in? Although that's a question I don't have to ask; I know Miss Snow, at least, is someone I can trust."

"I was coming to see you, Stet," Tarb said soothingly. "Right away."

"Oh, you were, were you? And have you seen this?" Stet fairly threw the paper at her. Smack in the middle of the front page was a picture of herself in full flight over the airfield bar. Not a very good picture, but what could you expect with Terrestrial equipment? When the autofax came, perhaps she would be done justice.

FIZBIAN NEWSHEN GIVES EARTH A FLUTTER

"Though No Mammal, I Pack a Lot of Uplift," Says Beautiful Fizbian Gal Reporter

"I feel that you Terrans and we Fizbians can get along much better," lovely Tarb Morfatch, Fizbus *Times* feature writer, told her fellow-reporters yesterday at the Moonfield Restaurant, "if we learn to understand each other's differences as well as appreciate our similarities.

"With commerce between the two planets expanding as rapidly as it has been," Miss Morfatch went on, "it becomes increasingly important that we make sure there is no clash of mores between us. Where adaptation is impossible, we must both adjust. 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do' is an outmoded concept in the complex interstellar civilization of today. The Romans must learn to accept us as we are, and vice versa.

"Forgive me if I've offended you by my frankness," she said, sticking out her tongue in the charming gesture of apology that is acquiring such a vogue on Earth, Belinda Romney and many other socialites having enthusiastically adopted it, "but you've violated our privacy so many times, I feel I'm entitled to hurt your feelings just a teeny-weeny bit . . ."

"Those Terran journalists," Tarb said admiringly. "Never miss a trick, do they? Am I in all the other papers too, Stet? Same cheesecake?"

"You've made an ovulating circus out of us—that's what you've done!"

"Nonsense. Good strong human interest stuff; it'll make us lovable as chicks all over the planet. Gee—" she read on

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—"did I say all that while I was caffeinated? I ought to turn out some pretty terrific copy sober."

"And to think you, the woman I had asked to make my wife, did this to me."

"Oh, that's all right, Stet," Tarb said without looking up from the paper. "I wasn't going to accept you, anyway."

"Good for you, Tarb," Drosmig approved.

"You're going back to Fizbus on the next liner—do you hear me?" Stet raged.

SHE smiled sunnily. "Oh, but I'm not, Stet. I'm going to stay right here on Earth. I like it. You might say the spiritual aura got me."

He snorted. "How can you possibly stay? You don't have an independent income and this is an expensive planet. Besides, I won't let you stay on Earth. I have considerable influence, you know!"

"Poor Stet." She smiled at him again. "I'm afraid the Fizbian press—the Fizbian consul even—are pretty small pullets beside the Solar Press Syndicate. You see, I came in this morning only to resign."

He stared at her.

"Yesterday," she informed him, "I was offered another position—as feature writer for the SP. I hadn't decided whether or not to accept when I reported back last evening, but you made up my mind for me, so I called them this morning and took the job. My work will be to explain Fizbians to Terrans and Terrans to Fizbians—as I wanted to do for the *Times*, Stet, only you wouldn't let me."

"It's no use saying anything to you about loyalty, I suppose?"

"None whatsoever," she said. "I owe the *Times* no loyalty and I'm doing what I do out of loyalty to Fizbus . . . plus, of course, a much higher salary."

"I'm glad for you, Tarb," Drosmig said sincerely.

"Be glad for yourself, Senbot, because Stet will have to let you conduct the column your way from now on. Either it'll supplement my work in the Terrestrial papers or he'll look like a fool. And you do hate looking like a fool, don't you, Stet?"

He didn't answer.

"Better give up, Stet." She turned to Drosmig. "Well, good-by, Senbot—or, rather, so long. I'm sure we'll be seeing each other again. Good-by, Stet. No hard feelings, I hope?"

He neither moved nor spoke.

"Well . . . good-by, then," she said.

The door closed. Stet stared after her. The forgotten umbrella dripped forlornly in the corner.

—EVELYN E. SMITH

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The Cave of Night

By JAMES E. GUNN

To qualify, a great tragedy has to meet strict scientific tests—and this met them all!

THE phrase was first used by a poet disguised in the cynical hide of a newspaper reporter. It appeared on the first day and was widely reprinted. He wrote:

"At eight o'clock, after the Sun has set and the sky is darkening, look up! There's a man up there where no man has ever been.

"He is lost in the cave of night . . ."

The headlines demanded something short, vigorous and descriptive. That was it. It was inaccurate, but it stuck.

If anybody was in a cave, it was the rest of humanity. Painfully, triumphantly, one man had climbed out. Now he couldn't find his way back into the cave with the rest of us.

What goes up doesn't always come back down.

That was the first day. After it came twenty-nine days of agonized suspense.

The cave of night. I wish the phrase had been mine.

That was it, the tag, the symbol. It was the first thing a man saw when he glanced at the newspaper. It was the way people talked about it: "What's the lat-

Illustrated by MEL HUNTER

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est about the cave?" It summed it all up, the drama, the anxiety, the hope.

MAYBE it was the Floyd Collins influence. The papers dug up their files on that old tragedy, reminiscing, comparing; and they remembered the little girl—Kathy Fiscus, wasn't it?—who was trapped in that abandoned, California drain pipe; and a number of others.

Periodically, it happens, a sequence of events so accidentally dramatic that men lose their hatreds, their terrors, their shynesses, their inadequacies, and the human race momentarily recognizes its kinship.

The essential ingredients are these: A person must be in unusual and desperate peril. The peril must have duration. There must be proof that the person is still alive. Rescue attempts must be made. Publicity must be widespread.

One could probably be constructed artificially, but if the world ever discovered the fraud, it would never forgive.

Like many others, I have tried to analyze what makes a niggling, squabbling, callous race of beings suddenly share that most human emotion of sympathy, and, like them, I have not succeeded. Suddenly a distant stranger will mean more than their own comfort. Every waking moment, they pray: Live, Floyd! Live, Kathy! Live, Rev!

We pass on the street, we who would not have nodded, and ask, "Will they get there in time?"

Optimists and pessimists alike, we hope so. We all hope so.

In a sense, this one was different. This was purposeful. Knowing the risk, accepting it because there was no other way to do what had to be done, Rev had gone into the cave of night. The accident was that he could not return.

The news came out of nowhere — literally — to an unsuspecting world. The earliest mention the historians have been able to locate was an item about a ham radio operator in Davenport, Iowa. He picked up a distress signal on a sticky-hot June evening.

The message, he said later, seemed to fade in, reach a peak, and fade out:

". . . and fuel tanks empty. —ceiver broke . . . transmitting in clear so someone can pick this up, and . . . no way to get back . . . stuck . . ."

A small enough beginning.

The next message was received by a military base radio watch near Fairbanks, Alaska. That was early in the morning. Half an hour later, a night-shift worker in Boston heard something on his

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short-wave set that sent him rushing to the telephone.

That morning, the whole world learned the story. It broke over them, a wave of excitement and concern. Orbiting 1,075 miles above their heads was a man, an officer of the United States Air Force, in a fuelless spaceship.

ALL by itself, the spaceship part would have captured the world's attention. It was achievement as monumental as anything Man has ever done and far more spectacular. It was liberation from the tyranny of Earth, this jealous mother who had bound her children tight with the apron strings of gravity.

Man was free. It was a symbol that nothing is completely and finally impossible if Man wants it hard enough and long enough.

There are regions that humanity finds peculiarly congenial. Like all Earth's creatures, Man is a product and a victim of environment. His triumph is that the slave became the master. Unlike more specialized animals, he distributed himself across the entire surface of the Earth, from the frozen Antarctic continent to the Arctic icecap.

Man became an equatorial animal, a temperate zone animal, an arctic animal. He became a plain dweller, a valley dweller, a mountain dweller. The swamp and the desert became equally his home.

Man made his own environment.

With his inventive mind and his dexterous hands, he fashioned it, conquered cold and heat, dampness, aridness, land, sea, air. Now, with his science, he had conquered everything. He had become independent of the world that bore him.

It was a birthday cake for all mankind, celebrating its coming of age.

Brutally, the disaster was icing on the cake.

But it was more, too. When everything is considered, perhaps it was the aspect that, for a few, brief days, united humanity and made possible what we did.

It was a sign: Man is never completely independent of Earth; he carries with him his environment; he is always and forever a part of humanity. It was a conquest mellowed by a confession of mortality and error.

It was a statement: Man has within him the qualities of greatness that will never accept the restraints of circumstance, and yet he carries, too, the seeds of fallibility that we all recognize in ourselves.

Rev was one of us. His triumph was our triumph; his peril—more fully and finely—was our peril.

Reverdy L. McMillen, III, first lieutenant, U.S.A.F. Pilot. Rocket

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jockey. Man. Rev. He was only a thousand miles away, calling for help, but those miles were straight up. We got to know him as well as any member of our own family.

THE news came as a great personal shock to me. I knew Rev. We had become good friends in college, and fortune had thrown us together in the Air Force, a writer and a pilot. I had got out as soon as possible, but Rev had stayed in. I knew, vaguely, that he had been testing rocket-powered airplanes with Chuck Yeager. But I had no idea that the rocket program was that close to space.

Nobody did. It was a better-kept secret than the Manhattan Project.

I remember staring at Rev's picture in the evening newspaper —the straight black hair, the thin, rakish mustache, the Clark Gable ears, the reckless, rueful grin— and I felt again, like a physical thing, his great joy in living. It expressed itself in a hundred ways. He loved widely, but with discrimination. He ate well, drank heartily, reveled in expert jazz and artistic incentiveness, and talked incessantly.

Now he was alone and soon all that might be extinguished. I told myself that I would help.

That was a time of wild enthusiasm. Men mobbed the Air Force Proving Grounds at Cocoa, Florida, wildly volunteering their services. But I was no engineer. I wasn't even a welder or a riveter. At best, I was only a poor word mechanic.

But words, at least, I could contribute.

I made a hasty verbal agreement with a local paper and caught the first plane to Washington, D. C. For a long time, I liked to think that what I wrote during the next few days had something to do with subsequent events, for many of my articles were picked up for reprint by other newspapers.

The Washington fiasco was the responsibility of the Senate Investigating Committee. It subpoenaed everybody in sight — which effectively removed them from the vital work they were doing. But within a day, the Committee realized that it had bitten off a bite it could neither swallow nor spit out.

General Beauregard Finch, head of the research and development program, was the tough morsel the Committee gagged on. Coldly, accurately, he described the development of the project, the scientific and technical research, the tests, the building of the ship, the training of the prospective crewmen, and the winnowing of the volunteers

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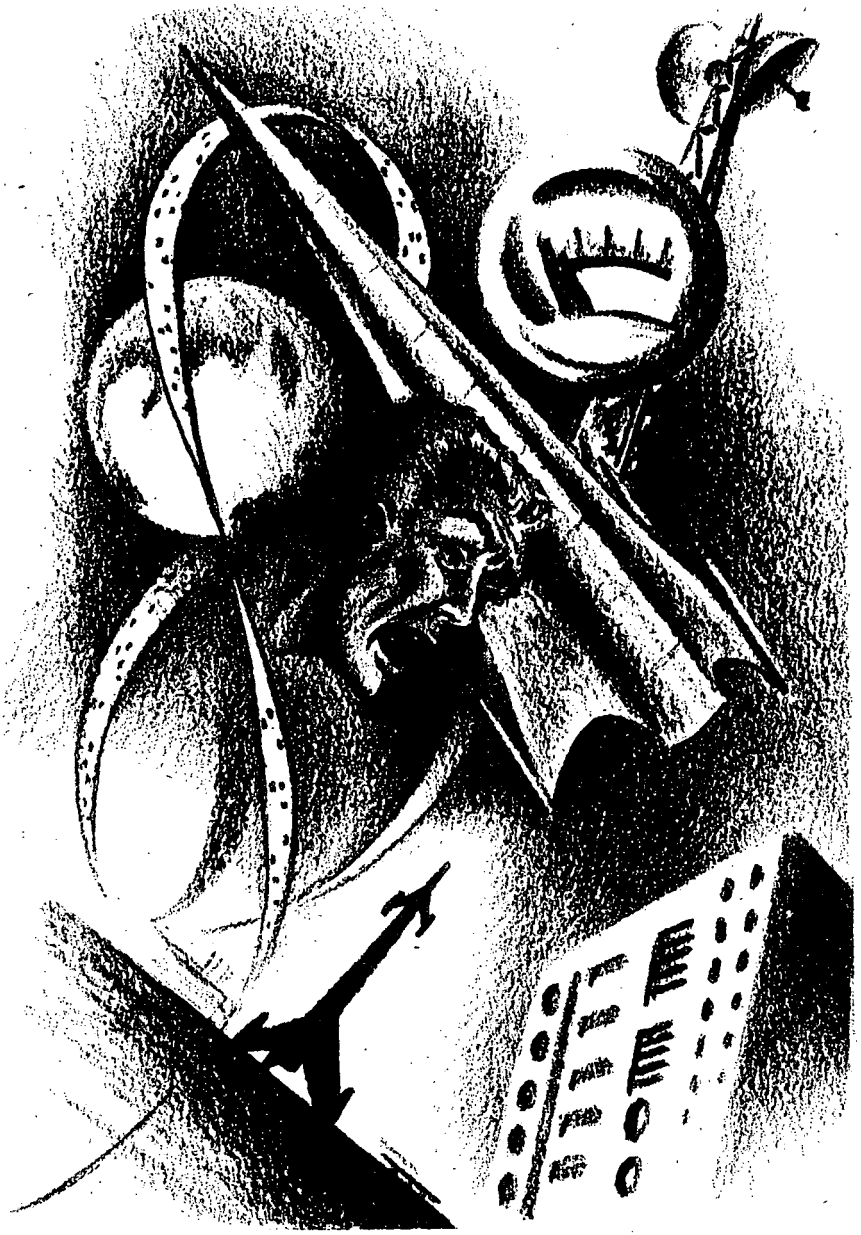

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down to one man.

In words more eloquent because of their clipped precision, he described the takeoff of the giant three-stage ship, shoved upward on a lengthening arm of combining hydrazine and nitric acid. Within fifty-six minutes, the remaining third stage had reached its orbital height of 1,075 miles.

It had coasted there. In order to maintain that orbit, the motors had to flicker on for fifteen seconds.

At that moment, disaster laughed at Man's careful calculations.

BEFORE Rev could override the automatics, the motors had flamed for almost half a minute. The fuel he had depended upon to slow the ship so that it would drop, re-enter the atmosphere and be reclaimed by Earth was almost gone. His efforts to counteract the excess speed resulted only in an approximation of the original orbit.

The fact was this: Rev was up there. He would stay there until someone came and got him.

And there was no way to get there.

The Committee took that as an admission of guilt and incompetence; they tried to lever themselves free with it, but General Finch was not to be intimidated. A manned ship had been sent up because no mechanical or electronic computer could contain the vast possibilities for decision and action built into a human being.

The original computer was still the best all-purpose computer.

There had been only one ship built, true. But there was good reason for that, a completely practical reason—money.

Leaders are, by definition, ahead of the people. But this wasn't a field in which they could show the way and wait for the people to follow. This was no expedition in ancient ships, no light exploring party, no pilot-plant operation. Like a parachute jump, it had to be successful the first time.

This was an enterprise into new, expensive fields. It demanded money (billions of dollars), brains (the best available), and the hard, dedicated labor of men (thousands of them).

General Finch became a national hero that afternoon. He said, in bold words, "With the limited funds you gave us, we have done what we set out to do. We have demonstrated that space flight is possible, that a space platform is feasible.

"If there is any inefficiency, if there is any blame for what has happened, it lies at the door of those who lacked confidence in the courage and ability of their countrymen to fight free of Earth

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to the greatest glory. Senator, how did you vote on that?"

But I am not writing a history. The shelves are full of them. I will touch on the international repercussions only enough to show that the event was no more a respecter of national boundaries than was Rev's orbiting ship.

THE orbit was almost perpendicular to the equator. The ship traveled as far north as Nome, as far south as Little America on the Antarctic Continent. It completed one giant circle every two hours. Meanwhile, the Earth rotated beneath. If the ship had been equipped with adequate optical instruments, Rev could have observed every spot on Earth within twenty-four hours. He could have seen fleets and their dispositions, aircraft carriers and the planes taking off their decks, troop maneuvers.

In the General Assembly of the United Nations, the Russian ambassador protested this unwarranted and illegal violation of its national boundaries. He hinted darkly that it would not be allowed to continue. The U.S.S.R. had not been caught unprepared, he said. If the violation went on—"*every few hours!*"—drastic steps would be taken.

World opinion reared up in indignation. The U.S.S.R. immediately retreated and pretended, as only it could, that its belligerence had been an unwarranted inference and that it had never said anything of the sort, anyway.

This was not a military observer above our heads. It was a man who would soon be dead unless help reached him.

A world offered what it had. Even the U.S.S.R. announced that it was outfitting a rescue ship, since its space program was already on the verge of success. And the American public responded with more than a billion dollars within a week. Congress appropriated another billion. Thousands of men and women volunteered.

The race began.

Would the rescue party reach the ship in time? The world prayed.

And it listened daily to the voice of a man it hoped to buy back from death.

The problem shaped up like this:

The trip had been planned to last for only a few days. By careful rationing, the food and water might be stretched out for more than a month, but the oxygen, by cutting down activity to conserve it, couldn't possibly last more than thirty days. That was the absolute outside limit.

I remember reading the carefully detailed calculations in the

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paper and studying them for some hopeful error. There was none.

WITHIN a few hours, the discarded first stage of the ship had been located floating in the Atlantic Ocean. It was towed back to Cocoa, Florida. Almost a week was needed to find and return to the Proving Grounds the second stage, which had landed 906 miles away.

Both sections were practically undamaged; their fall had been cushioned by ribbon parachute. They could be cleaned, repaired and used again. The trouble was the vital third stage—the nose section. A new one had to be designed and built within a month.

Space-madness became a new form of hysteria. We read statistics, we memorized insignificant details, we studied diagrams, we learned the risks and the dangers and how they would be met and conquered. It all became part of us. We watched the slow progress of the second ship and silently, tautly, urged it upward.

The schedule overhead became part of everyone's daily life. Work stopped while people rushed to windows or outside or to their television sets, hoping for a glimpse, a glint from the high, swift ship, so near, so untouchably far.

And we listened to the voice from the cave of night:

"I've been staring out the portholes. I never tire of that. Through the one on the right, I see what looks like a black velvet curtain with a strong light behind it. There are pinpoint holes in the curtain and the light shines through, not winking the way stars do, but steady. There's no air up here. That's the reason. The mind can understand and still misinterpret.

"My air is holding out better than I expected. By my figures, it should last twenty-seven days more. I shouldn't use so much of it talking all the time, but it's hard to stop. Talking, I feel as if I'm still in touch with Earth, still one of you, even if I am way up here.

"Through the left-hand window is San Francisco Bay, looking like a dark, wandering arm extended by the ocean octopus. The city itself looks like a heap of diamonds with trails scattered from it. It glitters up cheerfully, an old friend. It misses me, it says. Hurry home, it says. It's gone now, out of sight. Good-by, Frisco!

"Do you hear me down there? Sometimes I wonder. You can't see me now. I'm in the Earth's shadow. You'll have to wait hours for the dawn. I'll have mine in a few minutes.

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"You're all busy down there. I know that. If I know you, you're all worrying about me, working to get me down, forgetting everything else. You don't know what a feeling that is. I hope to Heaven you never have to, wonderful though it is.

"Too bad the receiver was broken, but if it had to be one or the other, I'm glad it was the transmitter that came through. There's only one of me. There are billions of you to talk to.

"I wish there were some way I could be sure you were hearing me. Just that one thing might keep me from going crazy."

REV, you were one in millions. We read all about your selection, your training. You were our representative, picked with our greatest skill.

Out of a thousand who passed the initial rigid requirements for education, physical and emotional condition and age, only five could qualify for space. They couldn't be too tall, too stout, too young, too old. Medical and psychiatric tests weeded them out.

One of the training machines—Lord, how we studied this—reproduces the acceleration strains of a blasting rocket. Another trains men for maneuvering in the weightlessness of space. A third duplicates the cramped, sealed conditions of a spaceship cabin. Out of the final five, you were the only one who qualified.

No, Rev, if any of us could stay sane, it was you.

There were thousands of suggestions, almost all of them useless. Psychologists suggested self-hypnotism; cultists suggested yoga. One man sent in a detailed sketch of a giant electromagnet with which Rev's ship could be drawn back to Earth.

General Finch had the only practical idea. He outlined a plan for letting Rev know that we were listening. He picked out Kansas City and set the time. "Midnight," he said. "On the dot. Not a minute earlier or later. At that moment, he'll be right overhead."

And at midnight, every light in the city went out and came back on and went out and came back on again.

For a few awful moments, we wondered if the man up there in the cave of night had seen. Then came the voice we knew now so well that it seemed it had always been with us, a part of us, our dreams and our waking.

The voice was husky with emotion:

"Thanks . . . Thanks for listening. Thanks, Kansas City. I saw you winking at me. I'm not alone. I know that now. I'll never forget. Thanks."

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And silence then as the ship fell below the horizon. We pictured it to ourselves sometimes, continually circling the Earth, its trajectory exactly matching the curvature of the globe beneath it. We wondered if it would ever stop.

Like the Moon, would it be a satellite of the Earth forever?

We went through our daily chores like automatons while we watched the third stage of the rocket take shape. We raced against a dwindling air supply, and death raced to catch a ship moving at 15,800 miles per hour.

WE watched the ship grow. On our television screens, we saw the construction of the cellular fuel tanks, the rocket motors, and the fantastic multitude of pumps, valves, gauges, switches, circuits, transistors, and tubes.

The personnel space was built to carry five men instead of one man. We watched it develop, a Spartan simplicity in the middle of the great complex, and it was as if we ourselves would live there, would watch those dials and instruments, would grip those chair-arm controls for the infinitesimal sign that the automatic pilot had faltered, would feel the soft flesh and the softer internal organs being wrenched away from the unyielding bone, and would hurtle upward into the cave of night.

We watched the plating wrap itself protectively around the vitals of the nose section. The wings were attached; they would make the ship a huge, metal glider in its unpowered descent to Earth after the job was done.

We met the men who would man the ship. We grew to know them as we watched them train, saw them fighting artificial gravities, testing spacesuits in simulated vacuums, practicing maneuvers in the weightless condition of free fall.

That was what we lived for.

And we listened to the voice that came to us out of the night:

"Twenty-one days. Three weeks. Seems like more. Feel a little sluggish, but there's no room for exercise in a coffin. The concentrated foods I've been eating are fine, but not for a steady diet. Oh, what I'd give for a piece of home-baked apple pie!

"The weightlessness got me at first. Felt I was sitting on a ball that was spinning in all directions at once. Lost my breakfast a couple of times before I learned to stare at one thing. As long as you don't let your eyes roam, you're okay.

"There's Lake Michigan! My God, but it's blue today! Dazzles the eyes! There's Milwaukee, and how are the Braves doing? It

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must be a hot day in Chicago. It's a little muggy up here, too. The water absorbers must be overloaded.

"The air smells funny, but I'm not surprised. I must smell funny, too, after twenty-one days without a bath. Wish I could have one. There are an awful lot of things I used to take for granted and suddenly want more than—

"Forget that, will you? Don't worry about me. I'm fine. I know you're working to get me down. If you don't succeed, that's okay with me. My life wouldn't just be wasted. I've done what I've always wanted to do. I'd do it again.

"Too bad, though, that we only had the money for one ship."

AND again: "An hour ago, I saw the Sun rise over Russia. It looks like any other land from here, green where it should be green, farther north a sort of mud color, and then white where the snow is still deep.

"Up here, you wonder why we're so different when the land is the same. You think: we're all children of the same mother planet. Who says we're different?

"Think I'm crazy? Maybe you're right. It doesn't matter much what I say as long as I say something. This is one time I won't be interrupted. Did any man ever have such an audience?"

No, Rev. Never.

The voice from above, historical now, preserved:

"I guess the gadgets are all right. You slide-rule mechanics! You test-tube artists! You finding what you want? Getting the dope on cosmic rays, meteoric dust, those islands you could never map, the cloud formations, wind movements, all the weather data? Hope the telemetering gauges are working. They're more important than my voice."

I don't think so, Rev. But we got the data. We built some of it into the new ships. *Ships,* not *ship,* for we didn't stop with one. Before we were finished, we had two complete three-stagers and a dozen nose sections.

The voice: "Air's bad tonight. Can't seem to get a full breath. Sticks in the lungs. Doesn't matter, though. I wish you could all see what I have seen, the vast-spreading universe around Earth, like a bride in a soft veil. You'd know then that we belong out here."

We know, Rev. You led us out. You showed us the way.

We listened and we watched. It seems to me now that we held our breath for thirty days.

At last we watched the fuel pumping into the ship — nitric acid and hydrazine. A month ago, we did not know their names; now we recognize them as the

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very substances of life itself. It flowed through the long special hoses, dangerous, cautiously grounded, over half a million dollars' worth of rocket fuel.

Statisticians estimate that more than a hundred million Americans were watching their television sets that day. Watching and praying.

Suddenly the view switched to the ship fleeing south above us. The technicians were expert now. The telescopes picked it up instantly, the focus perfect the first time, and tracked it across the sky until it dropped beyond the horizon. It looked no different now than when we had seen it first.

BUT the voice that came from our speakers was different. It was weak. It coughed frequently and paused for breath.

"Air very bad. Better hurry. Can't last much longer . . . Silly! . . . Of course you'll hurry.

"Don't want anyone feeling sorry for me . . . I've been living fast . . . Thirty days? I've seen 360 sunrises, 360 sunsets . . . I've seen what no man has ever seen before . . . I was the first. That's something . . . worth dying for . . .

"I've seen the stars, clear and undiminished. They look cold, but there's warmth to them and life. They have families of planets like our own sun, some of them . . . They must. God wouldn't put them there for no purpose . . . They can be homes to our future generations. Or, if they have inhabitants, we can trade with them: goods, ideas, the love of creation . . .

"But—more than this—I have seen the Earth. I have seen it—as no man has even seen it—turning below me like a fantastic ball, the seas like blue glass in the Sun . . . or lashed into gray storm-peaks . . . and the land green with life . . . the cities of the world in the night, sparkling . . . and the people . . .

"I have seen the Earth—there where I have lived and loved . . . I have known it better than any man and loved it better and known its children better . . . It has been good . . .

"Good-by . . . I have a better tomb than the greatest conqueror Earth ever bore . . . Do not disturb . . ."

We wept. How could we help it?

Rescue was so close and we could not hurry it. We watched impotently. The crew were hoisted far up into the nose section of the three-stage rocket. It stood as tall as a 24-story building. *Hurry!* we urged. But they could not hurry. The interception of a swiftly moving target is precision business. The takeoff was all calculated and impressed on the

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metal and glass and free electrons of an electronic computer.

The ship was tightened down methodically. The spectators scurried back from the base of the ship. We waited. The ship waited. Tall and slim as it was, it seemed to crouch. Someone counted off the seconds to a breathless world: ten — nine — eight . . . five, four, three . . . one—*fire!*

There was no flame, and then we saw it spurting into the air from the exhaust tunnel several hundred feet away. The ship balanced, unmoving, on a squat column of incandescence; the column stretched itself, grew tall; the huge ship picked up speed and dwindled into a point of brightness.

The telescopic lenses found it, lost it, found it again. It arched over on its side and thrust itself seaward. At the end of 84 seconds, the rear jets faltered, and our hearts faltered with them. Then we saw that the first stage had been dropped. The rest of the ship moved off on a new fiery trail. A ring-shaped ribbon parachute blossomed out of the third stage and slowed it rapidly.

The second stage dropped away 124 seconds later. The nose section, with its human cargo, its rescue equipment, went on alone. At 63 miles altitude, the flaring exhaust cut out. The third stage would coast up the gravitational hill more than a thousand miles.

OUR stomachs were knotted with dread as the rescue ship disappeared beyond the horizon of the farthest television camera. By this time, it was on the other side of the world, speeding toward a carefully planned rendezvous with its sister.

Hang on, Rev! Don't give up!

Fifty-six minutes. That was how long we had to wait. Fifty-six minutes from the takeoff until the ship was in its orbit. After that, the party would need time to match speeds, to send a space-suited crewman drifting across the emptiness between, over the vast, eerily turning sphere of the Earth beneath.

In imagination, we followed them.

Minutes would be lost while the rescuer clung to the ship, opened the airlock cautiously so that none of the precious remnants of air would be lost, and passed into the ship where one man had known utter loneliness.

We waited. We hoped.

Fifty-six minutes. They passed. An hour. Thirty minutes more. We reminded ourselves — and were reminded—that the first concern was Rev. It might be hours before we would get any real news.

The tension mounted unbear-

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able. We waited—a nation, a world—for relief.

At eighteen minutes less than two hours—*too soon,* we told ourselves, lest we hope too much—we heard the voice of Captain Frank Pickrell, who was later to become the first commander of the *Doughnut.*

"I have just entered the ship," he said slowly. "The airlock was open." He paused. The implications stunned our emotions; we listened mutely. "Lieutenant McMillen is dead. He died heroically, waiting until all hope was gone, until every oxygen gauge stood at zero. And then—well, the airlock was open when we arrived.

"In accordance with his own wishes, his body will be left here in its eternal orbit. This ship will be his tomb for all men to see when they look up toward the stars. As long as there are men on Earth, it will circle above them, an everlasting reminder of what men have done and what men can do.

"That was Lieutenant McMillen's hope. This he did not only as an American, but as a man, dying for all humanity, and all humanity can glory for it.

"From this moment, let this be his shrine, sacred to all the generations of spacemen, inviolate. And let it be a symbol that Man's dreams can be realized, but sometimes the price is steep.

"I am going to leave now. My feet will be the last to touch this deck. The oxygen I released is almost used up. Lieutenant McMillen is in his control chair, staring out toward the stars. I will leave the airlock doors open behind me. Let the airless, frigid arms of space protect and preserve for all eternity the man they would not let go."

Good-by, Rev! Farewell! Good night!

REV was not long alone. He was the first, but not the last to receive a space burial and a hero s farewell.

This, as I said, is no history of the conquest of space. Every child knows the story as well as I and can identify the make of a spaceship more swiftly.

The story of the combined efforts that built the orbital platform irreverently called the *Doughnut* has been told by others. We have learned at length the political triumph that placed it under United Nations control.

Its contribution to our daily lives has received the accolade of the commonplace. It is an observatory, a laboratory, and a guardian. Startling discoveries have come out of that weightless, airless, heatless place. It has learned how weather is made and predicted it with incredible accuracy. It has observed the stars

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clear of the veil of the atmosphere. And it has insured our peace . . .

It has paid its way. No one can question that. It and its smaller relay stations made possible today's worldwide television and radio network. There is no place on Earth where a free voice cannot be heard or the face of freedom be seen. Sometimes we find ourselves wondering how it would have been any other way.

And we have had adventure. We have traveled to the dead gypsum seas of the Moon with the first exploration party. This year, we will solve the mysteries of Mars. From our armchairs, we will thrill to the discoveries of our pioneers—our stand-ins, so to speak. It has given us a common heritage, a common goal, and for the first time we are united.

This I mention only for background; no one will argue that the conquest of space was not of incalculable benefit to all mankind.

The whole thing came back to me recently, an overpowering flood of memory. I was skirting Times Square, where every face is a stranger's, and suddenly I stopped, incredulous.

"Rev!" I shouted.

The man kept on walking. He passed me without a glance. I turned around and stared after him. I started to run. I grabbed him by the arm. "Rev!" I said huskily, swinging him around. "Is it really you?"

The man smiled politely. "You must have mistaken me for someone else." He unclampered my fingers easily and moved away. I realized then that there were two men with him, one on each side. I felt their eyes on my face, memorizing it.

Probably it didn't mean anything. We all have our doubles. I could have been mistaken.

But it started me remembering and thinking.

The first thing the rocket experts had to consider was expense. They didn't have the money. The second thing was weight. even a medium-sized man is heavy when rocket payloads are reckoned, and the stores and equipment essential to his survival are many times heavier.

If Rev had escaped alive, why had they announced that he was dead? But I knew the question was all wrong.

IF my speculations were right, Rev had never been up there at all. The essential payload was only a thirty-day recording and a transmitter. Even if the major feat of sending up a manned rocket was beyond their means and their techniques, they could send up that much.

Then they got the money; they

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got the volunteers and the techniques.

I suppose the telemetered reports from the rocket helped. But what they accomplished in thirty days was an unparalleled miracle.

The timing of the recording must have taken months of work; but the vital part of the scheme was secrecy. General Finch had to know and Captain — now Colonel—Pickrell. A few others—workmen, administrators — and Rev . . .

What could they do with him? Disguise him? Yes. And then hide him in the biggest city in the world. They would have done it that way.

It gave me a funny, sick kind of feeling, thinking about it. Like everybody else, I don't like to be taken in by a phony plea. And this was a fraud perpetrated on all humanity.

Yet it had led us to the planets. Perhaps it would lead us beyond, even to the stars. I asked myself: could they have done it any other way?

I would like to think I was mistaken. This myth has become part of us. We lived through it ourselves, helped make it. Someday, I tell myself, a spaceman whose reverence is greater than his obedience will make a pilgrimage to that swift shrine and find only an empty shell.

I shudder then.

This pulled us together. In a sense, it keeps us together. Nothing is more important than that.

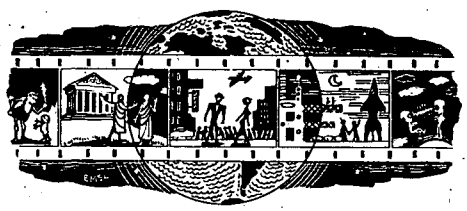
I try to convince myself that I was mistaken. The straight black hair was gray at the temples now and cut much shorter. The mustache was gone. The Clark Gable ears were flat to the head; that's a simple operation, I understand.

But grins are hard to change. And anyone who lived through those thirty days will never forget that voice.

I think about Rev and the life he must have now, the things he loved and can never enjoy again, and I realize perhaps he made the greater sacrifice.

I think sometimes he must wish he were really in the cave of night, seated in that icy control chair 1,075 miles above, staring out at the stars.

—JAMES E. GUNN



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DEAD MAN'S PLANET

By WILLIAM MORRISON

Illustrated by EMSH

When a driven man arrives at a cemetery world, what else can it be but journey's end—and the start of a new one?

OUTSIDE the ship, it was the sun that blazed angrily. Inside, it was Sam Wilson's temper. "Study your lessons," he snarled, with a savageness that surprised himself, "or I'll never let you set foot on this planet at all."

"Okay, Pop," said Mark, a little white around the nostrils. He looked old for so young a kid. "I didn't mean anything wrong."

"I don't care what you meant. You do as you're told."

In the quiet that followed, broken only by the hum of the

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arithmetic-tape, Sam wondered at himself. As kids went, Mark had never been a nuisance. Certainly Rhoda had never had any trouble with him. But Rhoda had been altogether different. Sam was tough and he had always got a sense of satisfaction out of knowing that he was hard-boiled. Or at least that was once true. Rhoda had been sweet, gentle . . .

He aroused himself from thoughts of her by calling, "Mark!"

"Yes, Pop?"

His voice had been harsher than he had intended. Over the past few weeks he seemed gradually to have been losing control of it. Now, although he was going to do his son a favor, he sounded like a slavemaster threatening a beating. "You can shut off your arithmetic lesson. We're going out."

"But didn't you want me—"

"I changed my mind."

Mark seemed more troubled than pleased, as if a father who changed his mind so readily was a man to be wary of.

I'm on edge all the time, thought Sam, *and I'm getting him that way, too. I'll have to regain control of myself.*

HE had long ago made all the necessary tests for such possible dangers as lack of oxygen and the presence of infectious organisms. On all counts, the planet had passed muster. The sun, whiter than Sol, was almost hot enough to make him forget the chill he carried deep inside him. Almost, but not quite, especially as the air, though breathable, was thin and deficient in nitrogen. The countryside was bleak, inspiring in him the thought that there are two kinds of desolation; the one that precedes the coming of Man, and the one which he knows only too well how to create wherever he goes. The desolation here was non-human.

"It—it's like a cemetery, ain't it, Pop?"

Sam looked at his son sharply. Kids of ten were not supposed to know much about cemeteries. Nor, for that matter, were kids of six, Mark's age when the funeral had taken place. Sam hadn't let him attend, but evidently the incident had made a deeper impression on his mind than Sam had realized. He would always remember a cemetery as the place where his mother lived. Perhaps he missed Rhoda almost as much as his father did.

"It's different from a cemetery," said Sam. "There's nobody buried here. Looks like we're the first human beings ever to set foot on this place."

"Do you think we'll find animals to catch, Pop?"

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"I don't see signs of any animals."

That was part of Sam's private fiction, that he was looking for strange animals to be sold to zoos or circuses. Actually he was seeking less to find anything new than to lose something he carried with him, and succeeding in neither attempt.

Mark shivered in the sun. "It's kind of lonely," he said.

"More lonely than the ship?"

"It's different. It's bigger, so it's more lonely."

I'm not so sure, argued Sam mentally. *In the ship, we have all of space around us, and nothing's bigger than that. Still, your opinion has to be respected. You're almost as great an expert on the various kinds of loneliness as I am. The difference is that you're loneliest when you're away from people. I'm loneliest in a crowd. That's why I don't mind this planet so much.*

He walked ahead, Mark following almost reluctantly. The ground was rocky and the shrub-like vegetation sparse and stunted, ranging in color from greenish gray to brown. It seemed hardly capable of supporting a large animal population. If there were any animals here at all, they were probably too small to be impressive, and would be of little interest to exhibitors.

They walked in silence for a few moments, and then Sam asked, "Want to go on?"

"I want to finish my studying."

That was something new. "Okay," said Sam, and turned back.

THEY were approaching the ship when the sound of a pebble falling came to Sam's ears. Automatically, his hand reached for his gun, and he swung around to face what might be danger. As he did so, something snarled and fled. He could see no sign of motion, but he could hear the scattering of other pebbles along a gully as the creature retreated.

"Looks like we're not alone here, after all," he said. "Wonder what that was."

"It couldn't have been very big," said Mark. "Big animals don't run away."

"Not usually, unless they're smart, or they've met people before. I'll have to set traps."

"Do you think maybe if you caught him you could sell him to a circus, Pop?"

"I'll have to see what he's like, first," said Sam. He looked around. "If there's one animal, there are likely to be others. It's strange that I didn't detect any sign of them."

He put his arm absently over Mark's shoulder. He didn't notice the expression on the kid's

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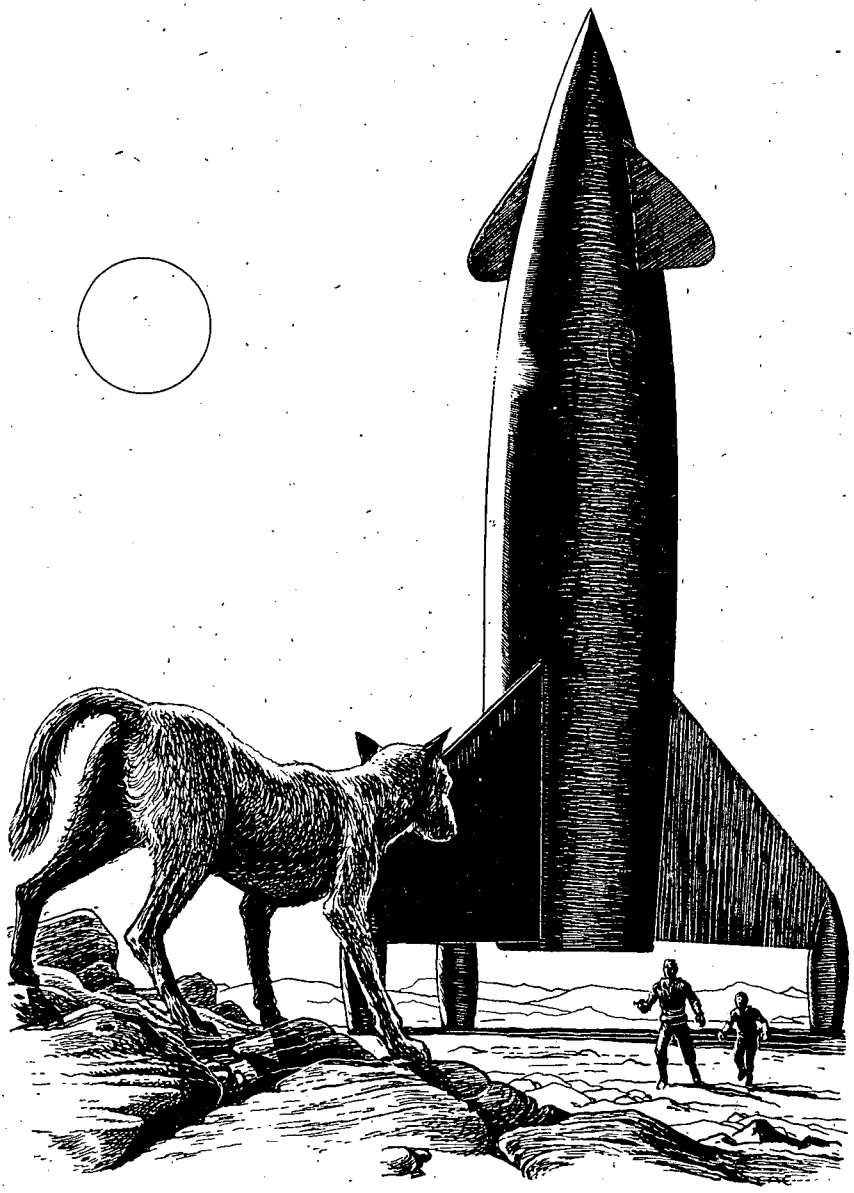

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face at this unexpected gesture.

When they were inside the ship again, Mark said, "Guess I'd better get back to my arithmetic."

"In a minute," said Sam. "I want to talk to you first." He dropped wearily into a seat, although he had done nothing that should have tired him out. His son looked at him expectantly. "Mark, do you like traveling around with me?"

"Sure, Pop, I like to be with you."

"Not seeing anybody else? No other kids, no people of any kind? Just being with me, learning your lessons from tapes, and having your test papers corrected automatically? You don't get tired of it?"

Mark hesitated despite himself. Then he said loyally, "I'd rather be with you than anybody else. When Mom—when Mom died—I didn't want to see anybody."

"I know how you felt. But that was four years ago. You can't grow up alone. Now what you need to do is meet people, learn how they talk and think and feel. You can't learn those things from tapes, and you can't learn them from me."

Mark said stubbornly, "I like to be with you."

"I'm not much of a person to be with. Don't think I don't know it. I'm mean and surly, and my temper's getting worse by the day. I can't associate with people any more. But *you* can. I was thinking maybe I'd leave you—"

"No!" cried Mark.

"Not in an orphanage or anything like that. But I have some friends whose kids are growing up—"

"No. I won't go. If you send me, I'll run away. I want to be with you."

"Okay," said Sam. "That's that."

But it wasn't, and he knew it. Even as he went about preparing his traps, he knew it.

AS it turned out, the only animals he caught in his traps were small ones which tore themselves in two and then scampered off, each half running in a different direction. For the animal which had made those noises, no traps were necessary. Later on he heard a noise outside again, and he went out cautiously, gun in hand. The animal backed away, but he saw it, then he heard it bark. So did Mark, who had followed him.

Mark's eyes almost popped. It was four years since he had heard the sound, but he knew at once what it was. "Gosh! A dog! How do you s'pose he got here?"

"I don't know," said Sam. "Your guess is as good as mine."

"But if we're the first human

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beings to land here—it ain't possible!"

"I know that. But there he is."

At the sound of their voices, the dog broke into a series of furious barks, backing away as it did so.

"What kind is he, Pop?"

"He looks like a mongrel to me. A bad tempered medium-sized mongrel with an ugly look about him. Maybe I ought to shoot him and get it over with."

"Shoot him? Don't do that! I want him as a pet."

"He looks too wild to make much of a pet."

The dog gave one last bark of defiance, turned, and fled in the same general direction, Sam noticed, as he had run last time.

"Maybe dogs *do* grow on other planets, Pop."

"Only if men have brought them there."

"Then that means there was a ship here?"

"At some time or other there was a ship. I don't think it was smashed up, or I'd have seen wreckage when I cruised around before landing. That dog was either left here by mistake, or deliberately marooned."

"Maybe—maybe he's with somebody who's still here."

"Not likely," said Sam thoughtfully. "He wanders around too freely, and he seems unused to the presence of human beings. Besides, no men would be likely to live here long without shelter. And I've seen no sign of any house or hut."

"Could he belong to a being that wasn't human?"

"No," replied Sam with certainty. "Only human beings have been able to domesticate dogs. If a dog is here, a human being was once here. That's definite."

"He *would* make a good pet," said Mark longingly.

"Not that one. Maybe I should have got you a dog long ago. It might have been just the kind of companionship you needed. But you can't make a pet of this animal. He's been away from people too long, and he's developed some mean habits." And he added mentally, "*Like me.*"

"I could train him," said Mark. "He wouldn't be any trouble at all, Pop. I'd train him and feed him, and he'd be just like one of us. And—and like you say, Pop, it wouldn't be so lonely for me."

Kids don't give up easily, thought Sam. All the same, he had an idea that with this dog all the persistence in the world would be useless. He shrugged, and said simply, "We'll see." And then they went into the ship to eat.

ALL through the meal he could tell that Mark was thinking about the dog. The boy's

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thoughts seemed to affect his appetite. For the first time, he left some of his proteinex on the plate.

"I'm not very hungry today," he said apologetically. "Maybe—" He looked inquiringly at his father.

"Go ahead and finish it," said Sam. "We've got plenty of food. I'll fix up something else for the dog."

"But I want to feed him myself, Pop. I want him to get used to me feeding him."

"I'll give you your chance later."

Afterwards, Sam thriftily opened an old can of a less expensive variety of proteinex and put half of it on a platter, which Mark carried outside the ship. He moved off about a hundred yards in the direction the dog had taken, and set the platter down on a rock.

"The wind is blowing the wrong way," said Sam. "Let's wait a while."

IN ten minutes the wind shifted, and if the dog was near, Sam felt certain that he had picked up both their scent and that of the food. That his feeling was correct was shown by the sudden appearance of the animal, who barked again, but this time not so fiercely. And he stopped barking to sniff hungrily, at the same time keeping his distance.

"Here, mutt," called Mark.

"I'm afraid he won't come any closer while we're around," said Sam. "If you want him to have that food, you'd better go away from it."

Mark reluctantly backed away with his father. The dog approached the food, finally rushing down upon it as if he feared it would escape, and gobbled it.

In the days that followed, they continued to feed him, and the animal became relatively tame. He stopped barking at them, and at times let Mark come within a few feet of him. But he never allowed Mark to come close enough to touch him, and he was especially wary of Sam. The latter could see, however, that there was nothing around the smooth furred neck. The collar, if it had ever existed, had evidently been worn away.

"So we can't find out what his name is," said Mark in disappointment. "Here Prince, here Spot, here Rover—"

The animal answered to none of the traditional dog names, nor to several of the newer ones that Mark recalled.

After the dog had been with them for a half hour or so he usually trotted off in the direction of what they had come to consider his lair.

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"He doesn't seem to be getting tame enough for a pet," said Sam. "That's one idea I'm afraid you'll have to give up."

"All he needs is a little more time," said Mark. "He's getting used to me." Then a sudden fear struck him, and he added, "You're not going to leave here yet, are you, Pop? I thought you wanted to catch some big animals."

"There aren't any other big animals," replied Sam. "Just those small ones who came apart in the traps, and they're not worth catching. But I'll stay. This place is as good as any other. I won't leave it yet."

IN fact, the stay on the planet, bleak as the place was, seemed to be less unpleasant than cruising aimlessly through space. Mark had been starved for companionship of someone besides his father, and in a way, without making too many demands, the dog was a companion. Wondering about the beast and trying to tame him gave them something with which to occupy their minds. It had been several days, realized Sam, since he had last snapped at Mark.

It had become quite certain now that there was no other human being around. The dog's eagerness for the food showed that no one else had taken care of him for a long time. Evidently he had been forced to feed himself on the small and elusive native animals which he could run down.

One of the things that puzzled Sam was the dog's obvious anxiety to leave the neighborhood of the ship after a short period and return to his lair. And one day, driven by curiosity, Sam followed him, with Mark coming along, too.

The dog had become sufficiently accustomed to them by now not to resent their presence, and it was easy to keep him in sight. He led the way for at least two miles, over rocky ground and past a small stream. Quite unexpectedly he stopped and began to whine and sniff the ground. As Sam and Mark approached, he turned on them, barking furiously.

The man and boy exchanged glances. "He's acting just like he did in the beginning," said Mark.

"There's something in the ground," said Sam. "I'm going to find out what it is." And he drew his gun.

"You're not going to kill him, Pop!"

"I'll just put him to sleep. An anaesthetic pellet of the kind I use for trapping ought to do the trick."

But one pellet turned out to be not enough. It required the

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bursting of three pellets before the animal finally trembled, came to a halt, and with eyes glazed, fell over on the ground.

When they approached closer, Sam caught sight of half a dozen stones, roughly piled together. He said, "Better get back, Mark. This may not be pleasant."

"You think—you think somebody's buried here?"

"Very likely. I'm going to see."

USING a flat rock with a sharp edge as an improvised spade, he began to dig. The ground was hard, and the rock was not the best of tools. It took him half an hour to reach the first bone, and another half-hour to uncover the rest.

Mark had come up behind him and was watching with no sign of revulsion. He said, "I—I was afraid there might be a body, Pop."

"So was I. It looks as if the man died so long ago that everything else has rotted away, except for a few metal clasps. No other sign of shoes or clothes. And no indication of how this happened."

"You think he was the dog's master?"

"Evidently."

They both stared at the sleeping animal. Then Sam shrugged, and began to fill the shallow grave again. Mark helped him push in the dirt and stamp it down into place. Finally they moved the stones back.

They were about to leave when Mark cried out, "Look at that rock!"

Staring where his son pointed, Sam saw a gray column about four feet high, with four smooth lateral sides. Rectangular prisms of this size were rare in nature. This was obviously the work of human hands, and of a blasting rod as well, to judge by the sides, which showed evidence of having been fused before weathering had cut into them. At first he had thought the column was a gravestone. But there was no inscription upon it. There was nothing but a thin deep groove that ran horizontally around the four sides, several inches from the top.

"What does it mean, Pop?"

"Let's find out. It's obviously been put here as some sort of memorial. As for this groove—"

He put his hands on the top of the stone and lifted. As he had half expected, it separated at the horizontal groove. The top of the stone was the lid of a box. Inside lay a plastic container.

"Some kind of plastic we don't make any more," muttered Sam.

"Aren't you going to open it?" asked Mark eagerly. "Maybe it tells about the grave and the dog's name."

The plastic came open at a

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slight tug. Inside were several strong sheets of paper. Sam stared at them and said, "It's writing, sure enough. But in some language I don't understand."

"We can put it in our mechanical translator," said Mark. "That can tell us what it means."

"That's what we'll do."

"Aren't we going to take the dog with us, Pop?"

"No, we'll leave him here. He'll come to in a little while."

WALKING back to their ship, Mark continued to show an excitement that was unusual for him. "You know what?" he said. "I'll bet we're going to learn what the dog's name is."

"I doubt if whoever wrote this thing would bother about a trifle like that."

"But that's important. You'll see, Pop, you'll see!"

At the ship, Sam inserted the sheets into the reader section of his translator and started the motor. The selector swung into action.

"Before it can translate, it has to decide what language this is," he explained.

"Will that take long?"

"A few minutes if we're lucky, a couple of hours if we're not. After that, I think the translation itself shouldn't take more than a few minutes. While we're waiting, we might as well eat."

"I'm not hungry," said Mark.

"You'd better eat anyway."

"Just a little bit, maybe. You know what I think, Pop? When I call the dog by his name, he'll know I'm his friend and he'll come to me. Then he'll really be my pet."

"Don't count too much on it," said Sam. And thought once more how lonely his son must be, to center so much hope in a half-wild beast.

A light glowed suddenly in the translator. The selector had found the proper language. Now it began to translate.

Twenty minutes later, its work had been completed. As Sam silently began to read, Mark bumped against him, knocking the translation from his hand. Sam's first reaction was anger at the boy's clumsiness. Then he became aware of the hope and the fear that lay behind Mark's excitement, and bit back the angry words which had almost reached his lips.

"Easy, Mark, easy," he said. He picked up the translation again and sat down. "You can read it over my shoulder, if you want to."

"I just want to find out the dog's name."

"The important thing is his master's name. Julian Hagstrom, it says. And he was on a spaceship with his brother, Raoul."

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Mark's eyes had skipped ahead. "Look, Pop, here's the dog's name—Arkem! I never heard of a dog having a name like that! What does it mean?"

"I wouldn't know," muttered Sam absently, still reading.

But Mark wasn't actually interested in his answer. He ran outside. "Arkem!" he called. "Arkem!"

There was nothing he could interpret as an answer. After a moment or two he came into the ship again, his face betraying his disappointment. "I guess he doesn't hear me. He's too far away."

Sam nodded. He had put the translation down and was staring straight ahead of him, as if looking through the ship's side.

"Is anything the matter, Pop?"

"What? Oh, no, nothing's the matter. I was just thinking about what I read here."

"They had an accident, didn't they? How did it happen?"

"IT happened because their ship wasn't as good as ours. Julian Hagstrom, the man who was killed, was buried here by his brother. Raoul put this record in the stone to mark his grave. I think he also engraved something on the stone itself. But that's been worn away."

"It must have been a long time ago. Maybe years."

"Yes, it was years ago. After he buried Julian, Raoul tried to make repairs, and headed in a direction where he hoped he'd find a civilized planet. He never made it."

"How can you know that? He wrote the paper *before* he started out."

"If he had made it, we'd have heard of him. We'd certainly have heard of him." Sam's face was bleak. "And Rhoda—your mother—would still be alive."

Mark looked puzzled, and stared at the translation once more. "It says here he tried to re-reverse the aging process. What does that mean? And what's immortality, Pop?"

"Something he and his brother were looking for. Something to keep people from ever dying. They had a ship full of dogs and other animals. All died in their experiments—all but Arkem. They had high hopes of Arkem. He lived through a number of different treatments and became quite a pet of Julian's. Then came the crash. Their method wasn't proof against accidental death, and at any rate they hadn't applied it yet to themselves.

"After Raoul buried his brother, the dog was miserable, and howled so much that Raoul decided to leave him behind. He was helped to reach this decision

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by the fact that the ship had lost much of its air in the accident, and he knew that the air-purifying mechanism wasn't working too well. He figured he'd have a better chance of surviving if he stayed in the ship alone. But it didn't do him any good. He was lost in space, or we'd certainly have heard of him."

From outside there came the sound of a low growl. "It's Arkem!" cried Mark. "Now you'll see. Wait till he hears me call his name."

He ran out, and Sam followed slowly. "Don't expect too much, Mark," he said, almost with pity.

Mark didn't hear him. "Arkem!" he called. "Arkem! Arkem!"

The dog was watchful, keeping his distance and giving no sign of recognition. Sam put his arm around his son's shoulder.

"Arkem, Arkem! Here, Arkem!"

The dog snarled.

THERE were tears in the boy's eyes. "He doesn't know his own name! He doesn't even know his own name! Arkem!"

"It's no use, Mark, he's forgotten he ever had a name. I'm afraid you'd better give up the idea of having him as a pet."

"But you *can't* forget your own name!"

"You can in eight hundred years. Yes, Mark, that's when all this happened, eight hundred years ago. That's why the language had to be translated. Arkem is immortal. And during his long life he's forgotten not only his name, but the master for whose sake he was marooned here. If Julian Hagstrom were, by some miracle, to come back to life, I'm sure the dog wouldn't remember him. All he has is a vague but strong tie to that heap of stones. He no longer knows why he's protecting it. He's been away from live human beings so long that his brain is little more than a bundle of reflexes and instincts."

"I'll train him," said Mark. "Sometimes you forget a thing at first, but it comes back to you later. He'll remember his name—here, Arkem!"

"It's no use," said Sam. "For eight hundred years he's been tied to that heap of stones. He'll never remember anything except that fact. I'll get you another dog for a pet."

"You mean we're going back to Mars or Earth?"

"Some place like that. Some place where there are people. Being alone in space is no good for you."

"Oh, no, Pop, you can't get rid of me like that."

"I'm not trying to get rid of you," said Sam. "Being alone in

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space is no good for me either. I'm going with you."

"Gee, are you sure? You won't change your mind?"

The delighted but uncertain look on his son's face shook Sam. He said carefully, "I won't change my mind. I've decided that it's possible to have too much of a good thing. If grief is a good thing."

Suddenly, for no reason that they could detect, the dog barked at them and backed away, the fur rising in an angry ridge along his back.

"Couldn't we take him along anyway?" asked Mark. "I don't like to think of him all alone here, year after year."

"He'll be miserable here, but he'd be more miserable away from his heap of dirt and stones. Perhaps—" Mark didn't see as Sam pulled his gun, then let it slip back into place. "No. That's none of my business. Maybe he'll be fortunate and have an accident."

"What did you say, Pop?"

"Nothing much. Come along, Mark. We're heading for civilization."

An hour later, the ship rose into the air. Through the blasting of the rockets, Sam thought—imagined, he decided, was a better word—that he heard the long doleful whine of a creature whose mindless grief was doomed to last for all eternity.

—WILLIAM MORRISON

Forecast

Next month's lead novelet is a Theodore Sturgeon shocker called WHO? When a spaceman is sealed in a tiny ship with a bulkhead separating him from the only other occupant, there's no more important question than that in the entire universe! *Who is it?* And the answer is more startling than anything you could possibly reason out for yourself!

And back comes Clifford D. Simak with a novelet, PROJECT MASTODON, that is hilarious in every way but one—if the project doesn't work, the whole human race can pack its bags and go somewhere else, for there may not be any *here and now!*

Watch, too, for the announcement of the GALAXY-Simon & Schuster prize novel winner! The biggest, richest prize in the history of science fiction deserves a spectacular winner . . . and we have it! More details next month.

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For Your Information

By WILLY LEY

HOW MUCH WATER?

ABOUT a year ago, I received an inquiry from a reader asking my opinion about the probable rise of the general sea level if the ice of the polar caps were melted. I replied at that time that, of course, not all the water from the melting polar caps would go into the oceans, but that a good deal of it

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would be tied up by increasing the glaciers on mountains, increasing the size of inland lakes, raising the water table everywhere, etc., etc., and that I would not expect a rise of the sea level of more than about six meters or 20 feet.

Somewhat to my surprise, this little item was noticed by a large number of people who mentioned it, mostly in personal conversations, for several months after it had appeared. Most of them expressed astonishment that the figure was so small, a few were as pleased with it as if it had been an immediate danger, while several told me bluntly that I had been too conservative in my answer.

One man distinctly remembered having read somewhere that if all the ice on Earth were melted, the sea level would rise by 6,000 feet. Since I recognized this figure, I could write him that he remembered only a part of what he had read. What this estimate—a fairly old one—really said was that *if* the Earth were smoothed out, shoveling all the continents into the oceans, as it were, *and* if all the ice were melted in the process, our planet would be covered with water 6,000 feet deep. Whether this estimate is correct is a different question, which I did not take the time to check.

ANOTHER correspondent questioned my statement that much of the water would be tied up again in glaciers. He argued that if the climate grew warm enough to melt the polar caps, it would also be too warm to permit the formation of mountain glaciers, that those glaciers we now have would melt, too. This, of course, is correct, but as I recall the original letter, an artificial melting of the polar caps had been in the correspondent's mind, not a subtropical Earth from pole to pole.

But this did not answer the critics who had told me that I had been too conservative, quoting from books like *Physical Geology* (by Longwell, Knopf and Flint, 3rd ed., 1948) that "it is estimated that the complete wastage of all the glacier ice existing today would return enough water to the sea to raise its level about 100 feet. This would drown vast areas of land, much of it densely populated and would submerge large parts of such cities as New York, Boston, London and Hamburg."

The strongest quote came from a professional geologist in Berkeley who found that Dr. Ahlmann, former professor of geography at the University of Stockholm, had written that "on the basis of the French results in Greenland, André Cailleux is quite right in

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saying that previous estimates of the world's existing glacier ice are too small. He calculates that the total volume of land ice must be between 26 and 36 million cubic kilometers. Melting of this volume of ice would raise the sea level by some 65 to 90 meters. Even after making allowance for isostatic adjustments, the rise would be from 43 to 60 meters. Now, as a result of the work in the Antarctic, we can say that the higher figure, 60 meters [197 feet], is probably a minimum value."

I conceded to correspondents that I *might* have been too conservative, but just the same I made a mental note that one day I would try to find out whether I actually had been. Pressure of other business intervened, but when I strolled, one Sunday afternoon, through the Chicago Museum of Natural History, I saw an exhibit which fitted right in with this problem. It was stated there that the northern Greenland ice covered an area of 637,000 square miles with an average thickness of 8,000 feet while the polar ice of Antarctica covered 5,000,000 square miles with an average thickness of 2,000 feet.

Since 5,000,000 square miles at 2,000 feet is the same as 1¼ million square miles at 8,000 feet, the figures also stated that the volume of the antarctic ice was very nearly twice that of the northern ice. And since 8,000 feet are just about 1½ miles, it was easy to compute that the northern ice amounted to 955,000 cubic miles. Since the southern ice was twice as much or 1,910,000 cubic miles, the polar ice of Earth had to be on the order of three million cubic miles—considerably less than Dr. Ahlmann's figures.

THE total surface of the Earth is 196,950,000 square miles. For the sake of simplifying the calculation, we'll round this off to 200,000,000 square miles. So the problem amounts to distributing 3,000,000 cubic miles over 200,000,000 square miles. All you have to do is to divide three by 200. The result is 0.015, which means that 1.5 per cent of a mile of water would be added, for 1.5 per cent of a mile is 79.2 feet.

This figure, of course, is four times as high as the one I had originally given. Even allowing for all the secondary factors, like the rise of the water table, the increase in area of existing lakes, the growth of mountain glaciers, the filling up of now dry depressions in arid areas and, last but certainly not least, the increase of the average relative humidity of the atmosphere, the rise would inevitably be greater than I stated.

In short, I had satisfied myself

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that I *had* been too conservative. Right now, however, I'm afraid that I may have to revise my opinion once more. *Time* of May 17, 1954, carried a short resume of a release by Edward L. Corton, Jr., of the U. S. Navy Hydrographic Office, dealing with the northern ice cap.

"At present," it stated, "the pack contains only 6,500 cubic miles of ice (barely enough to cover the state of Texas with a 125-foot layer) and it is steadily shrinking." This is just about 0.68 per cent of the figure for the northern ice which I had been using.

Apparently earlier researchers had been enormously misled by too few and too hasty measurements in a few spots and had greatly overestimated the amount of ice in the north. If that figure is correct, the melting of the northern ice alone would be just about 18 inches of additional water, while the southern ice by itself would contribute some 52 feet—*if* the figure of 5,000,000 square miles at an average of 2,000 feet of ice is correct.

But is it?

AN UNKNOWN REPTILE IN WEST TEXAS?

MY short piece on "Europe's Unknown Poisonous Lizard" brought me two interesting letters. One came from an American officer stationed in Bavaria who wrote that he had heard this animal mentioned, though he unfortunately had not seen it himself.

The other letter came from a Mr. W. E. Crutcher, now of Phoenix, Arizona, who topped my story with a tale of what might be an unknown reptile in West Texas.

"Some years ago," he wrote, "when I was traveling West Texas for manufacturers, I was driving on U. S. Highway 84 between Snyder and Roscoe, through moderately hilly country. Without warning, a creature ran across the pavement in front of my car and disappeared into the underbrush on the other side of the road. The experience was startling, to say the least, since I had never before seen anything quite like it.

"I have looked in a number of reference books to identify the animal—the reptile, to be more specific. It looked almost exactly like a miniature Tyrannosaurus and I would estimate its standing height at about three feet. In the short time I had to observe it, I couldn't determine too much detail. Its overall color was a light green, something between a lime and a chartreuse. It ran as a man runs, one leg before the other, holding its front legs loosely in

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front of its chest, with tail almost erect . . .

"I stopped for gasoline and inquired of the station proprietor as to the name of the critter. He identified it rather readily as a 'Mountain Boomer' and mentioned that he had seen them in his youth. He also said that if you 'chowsed' one of them (made as if you were going to attack it), it would run at you, hissing loudly. Those are about all the details that I can recall at this time, except that the gas station man 'believed' that it was poisonous."

My correspondent was convinced that the reptile he had seen was known, if probably rare, and asked for identification. What struck me most was the name Mountain Boomer. Only about a year ago, while looking for something else, I had found an old magazine article in which its author complained that nobody believed his truthful reports about a noise-making gigantic lizard in West Texas.

BUT first I wrote back to Mr. Crutcher, naming various reptiles known to run on their hind legs occasionally, adding that most of them are not supposed to occur any farther north than Mexico, but that an occasional "wetback" does not seem impossible, even though I did not know of any actual cases. I also told where he could find pictures of them.

He replied that none of them fitted his memory, though a reconstruction of an extinct saurian came fairly close: "If you'll look at vol. VII, p. 391 of the 1948 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* you'll find a panel depicting twelve dinosaurs. Figure 6 is Podokesaurus. Now, if you shorten the neck about half and reduce the tail about 60 per cent, fatten the standing legs a bit and erect the body so that the backbone is vertical or even inclining to the rear a slight bit, you have a pretty close approximation of a Mountain Boomer."

The letter went on to say: "I was able to determine the date as January 18, 1950. I note that I filled with gas at Colorado City on that date . . . and I am sure now that the sighting actually took place between Snyder and Colorado City on State Highway 101 instead of U. S. 84, not too far from the town of Dunn."

While this letter was in the mails, I refreshed my memory about the magazine article mentioned earlier. It can be found in the German monthly *Kosmos* for 1907 and was written by a man who referred to himself as "an old German Texan." His name was H. J. Richarz and he died in San Antonio where he apparently lived, off and on, most of his life.

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His memories dated back to the "early 1850s" and he stated that the lizard, at that time, occurred in the canyons of the Frio, Nueces and Devil's rivers.

Specifically, he wrote, he had heard the lizard (or iguana) call "or more properly whine" during a hunting trip "to the upper Seco and Rondo, accompanied by Dr. Wisselberg and Joe Ney." Mr. H. J. Richarz had supplied Prof. Ward of Rochester, N. Y., with Texan animals, but when he wrote of this reptile, Prof. Ward had proved skeptical and replied cautiously: "A crying or whining variety of lizards or iguanas would be of great scientific interest. But I have to doubt your assertion until you send me a specimen."

Mr. Richarz never did, but at a later date (about 1880, as can be inferred from his article), his son shot one and sent the head to his father, who said that it was like that of an iguana, about four inches long, that the scales were "a dirty silvery white, with a black ring around the neck immediately behind the head."

Well, that, to my regret, is all the available data. What ties the two reports, a century apart in time, together is the locality and the noise-making habit as specifically mentioned in one case and implied in the name of the animal of the second report. Do we deal here with unusual behavior of something otherwise known or is it actually a still unknown reptile?

ANY QUESTIONS?

Would the gravity be noticeably weaker at the equator than at the poles due to centrifugal force?

Jim Caughran
3110 *South 44th St.*
Lincoln 6, Nebraska

Since the movement of a point of the equator is just about 1,000 miles per hour, there is a noticeable difference in gravitational acceleration, usually called attraction. It does not matter in practice when the weights under consideration are relatively small, say 100 lbs. or so. But if you weighed a whole shipload of material on spring scales, you'd find a fair amount of "shrinkage." The precise figures are as follows, expressed in centimeters per second, squared:

at the pole	**983.13**
at 45°	**980.61**
at equator	**978.10**

To find the figure for any latitude L, the following formula is used: (1 - 0.0025935 times cosine of 2 L) multiplied by the figure for 45 degrees of latitude.

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I have read that over 99% of all stars are in spectral classes O, B, A, F, G, K and M, the remaining 1% belonging to other spectral classes. Would you describe them, please?

Donald Simpson
518 Auburn St.
Modesto, Calif.

The letters attached to the spectral classes of the stars are indications of their surface temperatures. The O-type stars are the hottest and the temperature decreases as you progress through the sentence, Oh, Be A Fine Girl, Kiss Me Right Now, Sweetheart. Specifically, in degrees centigrade:

O	**above**	**25,000°**
B	**"**	**23,000°**
A	**"**	**11,000°**
F	**"**	**7,400°**
G	**"**	**6,000°**
K	**"**	**5,100°**
M	**"**	**3,400°**
R	**below**	**3,000°**
N	**"**	**2,000°**

The S stars, of course, are the coldest. For finer distinctions, a number is added to the letter—K3 would mean, for example, that the star is colder than a K, namely 3/10th of the difference in the direction of M. R5 would mean halfway between R and N.

I have two questions: (1) what is the dividing line between a planet and a moon? I have read that some of Jupiter's moons are almost as large as the planet Mercury. Has the dividing line been picked so that Mercury is just above and Jupiter's moons just below? My second question is this: just what is a comet? I have never seen one.

Name Withheld
Red Bank, N. J.

There is no "dividing line" between planets and moons in regard to size. It would be quite possible for a moon to be far bigger than a planet (but not, of course, *its* planet) because the distinction lies in the movement. Bodies moving around the Sun are planets; bodies moving around a planet are moons.

Just to clean up loose ends at this point, I wish to add that a "moon of a moon" is a theoretical possibility, though we don't seem to have any in our solar system. If a moon and "its" planet should be of fairly equal size, one would probably refer to them as a "double planet." Since the Earth-Moon system approaches this condition, some authors have used the term "double planet" for Earth and Moon.

I do not agree with this usage because the common center of gravity of the Earth-Moon system is still inside the Earth.

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"Double planet," in my opinion, should be used only if the common center of gravity is somewhere between the *surfaces* of the two bodies.

As for comets, there are a few every year, but all since the last appearance of Halley's comet have been quite small; that is to say, telescopic. The few large enough to be visible to the naked eye were absolutely unspectacular.

The comets move around the Sun like the planets, but their orbits are highly elongated ellipses while those of the planets are nearly circular ellipses.

The behavior and appearance of the comets has been explained by Dr. Fred L. Whipple of Harvard Observatory by assuming that a comet consists essentially of frozen gases of various kinds, mostly such simple substances as carbon dioxide, water and ammonia. Some solid matter (dust particles) is probably imbedded in this mixture. As the comet approaches the Sun, the frozen gases evaporate, forming first the so-called "coma" of the comet and then its tail.

According to Van Nostrand's Scientific Encyclopedia, the White Dwarf star 0_2 Eridani B has a specific gravity, or density in terms of water, of 64,000. I would like to know how this is possible when the heaviest elements on Earth have densities of only slightly higher than 20.

Charles Husted
2609 *Arnott*
San Diego 17, Calif.

The explanation for the wide discrepancy between the densities of the heaviest elements found on Earth and the densities of the White Dwarf stars lies in the fact that terrestrial matter is always composed of "complete atoms" while the matter of the White Dwarfs is not. Each terrestrial atom consists of a nucleus, composed of protons and neutrons, which is surrounded by a number of electrons. The electrons move around the nucleus in so-called "shells" at various definite distances.

Under any normal pressure which may occur on Earth and even under laboratory pressures obtained so far, the forces holding the atom together are strong enough to resist any attempt to squeeze the electron shells of one atom into the electron shells of the neighboring atom.

It is for this reason that liquids and solids are virtually incompressible. But there must be a limit to the resistance the electron shells of an atom can offer. If the external pressure is

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large enough, it must be possible to crush the electron shells.

This, astrophysicists have deduced, is what happened in the White Dwarfs. If you consider such "crushed matter," as it is called, you realize that there is no longer any meaning to the word "atom." You no longer have atoms, but a mixture of atomic nuclei and unattached electrons, probably free neutrons, too. Because there are no whole atoms left, there can no longer be any great resistance against outside pressures so that matter, once crushed, can be compressed still more with relative ease.

Compressibility is normally the characteristic of a gas and crushed matter (although it probably would look like molten iron) must, therefore, be considered a gas. Since Enrico Fermi was the first to investigate the theory of crushed matter, this entirely unexpected new state of matter is often referred to as a Fermi gas.

I recently looked through an astronomical book for the diameter of the Moon.

I found it all right, but at the bottom of one page I saw something which was not explained. It said: January 1st, 1950 A.D. —J.D. 2,433,283.

What does that mean?

C. F. Weinstein
Kansas City, Mo.

The letters J.D. stand for Julian Day. This is a method, used almost exclusively by astronomers, to pin down a date without reference to the year. Especially when it comes to B. C. dates, you always have to remember that 1 A.D. followed immediately after 1 B.C., though logically one should expect a year *zero* (namely, the year of the birth of Christ) between them.

In addition to this difficulty there have been, as you have read in last month's column, several revisions of the calendar which would have to be taken into consideration.

To avoid all these difficulties, one Joseph Scaliger, quite some time ago, suggested simply counting days, without reference to months or years. To make this scheme workable, one had to start at a very early arbitrary date and Scaliger chose January 1st, 4713 B.C. He also suggested calling the days counted from that date the Julian Days. This has nothing to do with Julius Caesar and the Julian calendar, but was meant to honor Joseph Scaliger's father Julius.

The Julian Day 2,429,630 is the first of January, 1940; the

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figure you happened across is the J.D. number for the first day of 1950. Since the J. D. is used chiefly by astronomers, it does not begin at midnight, because that may change the J. D. in the middle of an observation. The Julian Day consequently begins at noon.

Why is a salamander called an amphibian like a frog, but a lizard is called a reptile like a turtle? Does it have anything to do with whether they live in water or on land?

Morris Moore
Philadelphia, Pa.

Yes, it does have something to do with where they live, but the connection is not that simple. The word "amphibian" comes from *amphi* (both) and *bios* (life) and means that such animals live both in water (fresh water only) and on land in the course of their lives. The best and also best-known example is the frog, which is hatched in water, goes through a tadpole stage and then climbs up on land where it may spend the rest of its life, going back into the water only for mating. The marine turtles (reptiles) do the opposite; they spend all their lives in the seas and crawl back on land only to lay their eggs.

More specifically, amphibians have gills when immature and lungs later, although a few of them retain the gills all their lives. Amphibians also have a soft skin equipped with skin glands, which may be the reason why no salt-water amphibian is known. Reptiles have lungs and a skin covered with scales and *without* skin glands and are essentially land animals, even though some, like the marine turtles, the marine iguana of the Galápagos islands and the sea snakes of the Indian Ocean, have chosen to return to the ocean.

—WILLY LEY

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OPEN HOUSE

By J. T. McINTOSH

When Earth gave a housewarming, the Visitors brought the gifts . . . but who would get the gate?

Illustrated by SENTZ

NOBODY saw the Visitors come, nobody saw them go, and when they were gone nobody could describe them, except as ordinary-looking people. But there was never any doubt that they had been. They left plenty of evidence.

They didn't go in for high-power salesmanship while they were here. They didn't have to. All they had to do was show their various gadgets for us to want—and we wanted.

"Like donkeys with carrots hung in front of their noses," Uncle Egbert sniffed. We did exactly what the Visitors wanted so quickly and with so little trouble that they must have thought we were dumb indeed.

There was some excuse for us, when you consider the gadgets. Mighty Atoms, then matoms, they came to be called, these gadgets—if you can call a power station in a matchbox a gadget, or a flying-belt, or a seven-million-word library the size of a pocketbook, or a suit which you could pack away in a thimble.

We needed a whole new dictionary of words for the matoms. Most of them were portmanteau

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words. When things for which the Greeks hadn't a word come along one at a time, the people who make the languages have time to think up smart new names. But if they come out in a flood, as the matoms did, names for them have to come out in a flood too, or you'd have things without names at all, which would never do.

The seven-million-word library was really a microfilm container and projector, so it was called first MCAP and then micap. The power station in a matchbox was supposed to be a receiver picking up solar power from an automatic master plant set up inside Mercury's orbit. So the visitors said, anyway. Uncle Egbert said, "Hah!" explosively.

It was all very farfetched and we knew there must be a catch in it somewhere, but we called the things sopos — sopo for solar power. The suits which would go in thimbles needed different names for each variety — flims, duples and minpas (minpa for *multum in parvo*).

AFTER the Visitors had gone, nobody seemed to know much about them, even what they looked like. I had an idea they were small people, dressed in dark clothes, but Thea said they were medium-sized and only some of them wore dark clothes. Considering that the things they brought were so much more interesting than *they* were, it wasn't really surprising that we didn't remember much about the Visitors themselves. It was irksome, though, that we didn't even have a name for them, or know whether they came from outer space, or up through holes in the ground.

But it seemed (at first) to be going a bit far to suggest, as some romancers did, that it was incredible that so little should be remembered or known of the Visitors unless they had used some form of mass hypnosis on us. There was no need for such a wild explanation. The things the Visitors brought had naturally claimed our full attention. If Special Delivery suddenly deposited Marilyn Monroe on your doorstep, you wouldn't remember much about the delivery men, would you?

This sort of argument was what we called being reasonable.

We remembered what had happened, all right—how the Visitors had shown us their whole dazzling array of matoms; how we'd tried to buy them; how we found that the idea really seemed to shock the Visitors. They couldn't possibly sell us matoms—nor exchange them for anything we had, for that came to the same thing, apparently.

"Why not?" Uncle Egbert ask-

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ed some of them bluntly once.

"It's against the regulations," they said. "Values differ . . ."

"But you obviously *want* to sell these things," he pointed out.

"Who told you? How do you know?"

"Look," Uncle Egbert said disgustedly, "you come and open your case and show us your goods. Obviously you want to sell them, or anyway you want us to have them on some terms, for some reason."

Private committee meeting. Then: "This is obvious to you, but not to everybody. You are a genius, perhaps?"

It was no new idea to Uncle Egbert. Nor was the opposite point of view, that nobody who was related to Thea could possibly be a genius. He's Thea's Uncle Egbert, by the way, not mine.

We didn't find the exchange medium then, but Thea, of all people, found it soon afterward. She came in crowing with delight and wearing a snazzy flim playsuit.

After I'd picked up my eyes and put them back in their sockets, I asked Thea how she got it.

"I'd have done *anything* for such a lovely thing," said Thea, staring down at herself in awe and rapture. She looked up, caught my eye, and faltered, "Bu—but I didn't have to, of course. They just gave me it."

For a moment I was jealous, unreasonable, on the point of hitting the roof, as jealous lovers always are, but Uncle Egbert told me to keep the head and asked derisively if I thought Thea had the brains to tell a lie.

That was unanswerable. I was never jealous again. It was ridiculous to suggest that Thea could deceive me, even if she wanted to.

She was vague about how she had got the playsuit, but we gathered that all she'd had to do was say things until, by a process of trial and error, she said what the Visitors wanted.

"That's all right so long as you didn't sign anything," said Uncle Egbert, with relief.

AND presently we learned for ourselves how to get the matoms. That was the bit when we acted like donkeys with carrots hung in front of their noses. The Visitors had a sort of verbal contract they led us through, and we, with our eyes on the carrots, gabbled what was necessary without paying much attention to what we were saying.

"Though when you do pay attention," Uncle Egbert observed, "it doesn't seem to make much difference. You have to say very definitely that you want the thing in question, that you won't be happy until you get it, that you

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don't understand how it was made, that you don't think you ever will understand, and that you only want the item to use it, not to take it apart. You don't have to promise anything or agree to anything. I don't see the point."

The Visitors seemed to think we'd all want sopos, but as Thea said, "Who'd go wild over sopos when we have power points where we want them anyway? But gee, those flims! I'd have given my back teeth for one outfit—if I'd had to, that is."

The demand for flims, duples and minpas took the Visitors by surprise. They'd been ready with sopos, flelts (flying belts), micaps, E-motors (eternal motors that ran off solar power) and a dozen other gadgets whose purpose they had to explain. The spu (a little thing that looked like a model of human intestines, which they explained was a spaceship propulsion unit), the iplar (interplanetary radio) and the borer (a drill with a completely indestructible tip, the size of a suitcase).

Cereainly there were some takers, chiefly teen-agers, but in the main hardly anyone wanted micaps, let alone spus, iplars and borers.

"What use is a spaceship propulsion unit without a spaceship?" Uncle Egbert asked once.

"It's the only bit you can't make yourself," the Visitors said.

"Bit of what?" Uncle Egbert asked.

"Bit of a spaceship," they told him.

"But I don't want a spaceship," he replied.

That took their breath away. Apparently it was utterly dumfounding to them that Uncle Egbert didn't want a spaceship.

However, when they produced their marvelous textiles, equally marvelously conceived, designed and tailored, everyone was excited—the women over the clothes, and the men over the prospect of women wearing them. The Visitors did try matom clothes for men, but they never caught on.

THE flims were one-piece garments — swimsuits, pajamas or nightgowns, as strong and opaque as the usual variety, but each with the substance of about one-tenth of one silk stocking. Since they were strong and opaque, they were wearable. They must have been, for millions of women wore them, generally *after* having said they couldn't *possibly*, but being about the thickness of a coat of paint, they were a trifle sensational in other respects.

"That's the only way," Uncle Egbert observed dispassionately, the first time he saw Thea in a

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flim swimsuit, "that a girl can be naked while wearing something. Having some knowledge of your sex, I've no doubt full advantage will be taken of the phenomenon —to the ruination of weak characters like Jacky here."

"Like it?" asked Thea coyly, putting the flim and Thea on display with four seductive, simultaneous flections of elbows and knees.

I opened my mouth, but not to say anything, only to let out the steam.

THE duples and minpas brought in another principle. Take a duple evening gown. For the first time in history, a girl could be comparatively warm on her way to a social function in December, wearing only an evening dress. For, though her outfit still had next to no substance, there were ten insulating layers of air in it. Or in spring, or even winter, a girl could go out in a temperature of forty or under, wearing what looked like a summer dress with little or nothing underneath it, although it was actually a complete outfit incorporating twenty-six layers of air . . .

Yes, the Visitors seemed puzzled when we fell on the sheer, trick clothes with delight and showed little or no interest, for the most part, in spaceship drives, interplanetary radio and portable power stations.

It wasn't entirely that we didn't believe these things *were* spaceship drives and so on. We could try out the sopos and flelts in two minutes and see that there was no hoax about them. The Visitors must have thought we were dumb, going for the mirrors and strings of beads instead of the genuine tin alarm-clocks . . .

Yet, were we? Uncle Egbert isn't so sure. He tells the old story of the boy who, offered a shiny new penny or a dirty old nickel, would invariably take the penny. This happened time and again. When at last his sister begged him to stop being so dumb, disgracing the family, he pointed out that if he'd taken the nickel that would have been the end of the experiment. Instead he'd already made over a quarter in pennies . . .

Maybe it was like that to a certain extent. Thea got a flim swimsuit, nightdress and two pairs of pajamas, two duple evening dresses and summer frocks and half a dozen assorted minpa outfits — winter suits, a riding habit and a skating costume. While she was amassing this collection of sartorial miracles, she also acquired, incidentally, a sopo, a micap, a flelt and an iplar.

True, she didn't appreciate them. When we got married, much later — the Visitors were

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gone by this time—she asked if we should bother keeping all this junk. Thea, I should mention, is a mechanical moron . . . but perhaps I've implied that already.

Anyway, it was *there,* that's the point, appreciated or otherwise.

AFTER the Visitors had gone, we were left looking a little dazedly at what they'd left behind. Then we really started to *use* it. What was the point of hydro-electric power schemes when all that was needed was a network of wire and a sopo? Who was going to be first to build a ship around a spu and get to the Moon, Mars, Venus? What would the interplanetary commercial radio rights be worth? Could iplars be adapted for TV?

"You know," said Uncle Egbert thoughtfully, "I think our recent callers went away with quite a wrong idea of us. They knew all about our first thoughts, the flims, duples and minpas, but they didn't wait for our second thoughts . . ."

Almost as quickly as it started, the flim craze died. We knew how to make them now so the novelty was gone. It was like bikinis a few years back—having gone as far as possible in one direction, we could only turn and go the other way. Duples remained, because they were practical. The minpa principle continued to be used, but what we knew as minpas disappeared.

"It doesn't *look* right," Thea argued, "and it doesn't *feel* right, either. I mean, minpas do keep you warm, but you expect to be wrapped up when there's snow on the ground, not looking like you're on your way to a picnic."

This, for Thea, was high-power thinking.

Gradually we emerged from the fog. No photographs existed of the Visitors, which was almost incredible. There *must* have been a first contact, when we asked who they were, where they'd come from and what they wanted. There *must* have been ships. We must have noticed and followed up clues of the Visitors' nature, origin, purpose, unless . . .

Unless the farfetched idea that we had rejected at first was true after all, and there had been some form of mass hypnosis.

"You can fool all of the people for some of the time," declared Uncle Egbert, "but false ideas are like cuts—they heal, eventually."

So we gradually began to realize that the Visitors had deliberately prevented us from learning anything about them and, in general, had done with us exactly what they wanted. Which was, apparently, to leave us with the

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matoms and only the most vague ideas of *how* we had got them, and from *whom*.

"They're nice people, then," said Thea warmly. "Missionaries—that's it. They came to help us and to give us things."

Uncle Egbert frowned. "I thought that myself until now," he admitted. "But if *you* think so, Thea, that can't be right."

IF we looked up the back issues of the newspapers, we found the Visitors mentioned often enough, but no more information than we remembered. If what we remembered could be censored, it wasn't really surprising that what we had written at the time had been censored, too.

And it became clear that the contract, or whatever it was—the terms on which they had given us the matoms—must be important.

"We had to say that we really wanted them," Uncle Egbert mused. "That we couldn't see how they were made, that we didn't think we ever would, and that we wanted to use the things, not take them apart. But what guarantee could the Visitors have had that we meant what we said? We didn't, anyway. What's the good of getting us to say anything that they can't enforce? If there's anything there to enforce, which there *isn't* . . ."

He was quite annoyed about it all, taking it as an insult to himself personally.

"Don't worry about it, Uncle Egbert," said Thea cheerfully. "It doesn't bother me at all."

"It won't beat me," said Uncle Egbert furiously. "I'll make sense out of it, somehow."

He didn't get the chance. A newspaper columnist maliciously forestalled him, pointing out that from the circumstances of the handing over of the matoms, the declaration the Visitors had insisted on could only be a cover for *them,* not a promise or undertaking by us.

"Of *course,* of *course!*" Uncle Egbert said when he read it, stamping about and raging because he hadn't thought of it first. "I should have known. That Visitor talked about regulations, about values being different. He didn't mean economic values, he meant ethical values. Naturally their ethics are different from ours. They weren't supposed to *sell* us the matoms, but they could *give* them under those conditions."

WELL, it took Uncle Egbert and the rest of the world a long time to reach a final decision on what the Visitors had been doing, and why. But slowly, step by step, they managed it. What they decided between them

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was something like this:

We on Earth were a pretty backward race, compared with the Visitors, judging by the matoms. And perhaps they had merely been extending a helping hand . . . perhaps.

What would happen if you gave savages howitzers and machine-guns? If you went back to prehistoric and made Neanderthal Man a present of the atom bomb? If you let Eighteenth-Century doctors use penicillin, b.c.g., sulphonamides, streptomycin and the rest of Twentieth-Century *materia medica?*

Well, what *would* happen? Could you call it any less than disaster?

No, the Visitors hadn't been extending a helping hand.

Ignorance isn't always a bad thing. The savages, Neanderthal Man and Eighteenth-Century doctors were protected by their own ignorance.

Postulate a big galactic organization that was very strict about what contact could be made with non-member races and what couldn't, and exploiters sneaking in under the ban with cute schemes to get around the galactic regulations . . . and what we knew began to make sense.

Not to Thea, naturally. She stared at Uncle Egbert as if he had suddenly turned green. "But you've always been so *clever!*" she exclaimed. "I never thought *you'd* be taken in by tripe like that, Uncle Egbert."

"I wish it were tripe," Uncle Egbert declared bitterly. "On the contrary, it's a very sound idea to hand out rifles to savages so that they'll exterminate each other without forcing you to murder them and violate your high ethical principles. Very sound indeed."

"Rifles?" said Thea, puzzled.

"Well, perhaps not rifles," Uncle Egbert admitted. "The Visitors were more subtle than that. They handed out power, not rifles. Power to make things much more destructive than rifles. Power to fuse a million wires, set factories and towns on fire. Later, power to go to the Moon, to the planets. Power to make bigger and better mistakes. Power that mankind doesn't know how to handle, and won't have time to learn to handle before it proves fatal.

"Ignorance *is* a powerful protection, a very powerful protection indeed. The caveman couldn't stumble on the secret of the atom bomb—he could only learn how to make fire. That might lead to the hydrogen bomb a few thousand years later, but the rolling stone would have gathered a lot of moss on the way . . . explanatory, protective moss."

"Say, Uncle Egbert," said

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Thea, concerned, "you'd better get to bed right away. Gee, yes, your brow feels hot, right enough."

BUT you couldn't stop Uncle Egbert as easily as that, not when he was properly wound up. "The galactic organization knows all about that," he went on, his powerful enough voice rising to a roar, "so our ingenious friends come along and get us to give them an excuse. The excuse that we don't understand the matoms, and never will, and want them only to use them as individual items. Certainly not to take them apart and try to find how they work . . . no, not *that*. They'll be able to say, later, that we said that and they believed it.

"Then they hand out matoms, knowing that when they come back in a few years the rather backward people who live on Earth will have destroyed themselves or at least destroyed their civilization and returned to savagery. It's inevitable—it's absolutely inevitable as long as human beings are human beings."

His face purple, he bawled his peroration: "Then, of course, they can take what they want, enslave Earth and set the iron heel of the conqueror on it for ever!"

Uncle Egbert, to do him justice, did say all this before it was the general, established point of view on what the Visitors had been, done and intended. It took about five years, but in the end everybody agreed with Uncle Egbert. He was a prophet, unsung, and without honor in his own country.

We found what had kept us from seeing the Visitors properly, and all the other things they hadn't wanted us to see. Something in the design of the micap, a sort of concentration booster, suggested the interference field that jams the perception and awareness centers and enables skillful operators to make people believe they've seen the Indian rope trick or anything else. Soon we could use it ourselves, and thus could guess how the Visitors must have used it.

We soon managed to tape some of the power the matoms represented. Most of Chicago was blown up in one experiment, and a chunk of Southern Italy in another. Forty-seven factories in North America alone were destroyed before we learned enough about solar power to be able to use it safely.

"I tell you," said Uncle Egbert, "it's only a matter of time."

There was extensive damage in Las Vegas, not caused by solar power this time, but by spu experiments.

"Why do people do these things

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if they're so dangerous?" Thea wondered.

"Have you ever," inquired Uncle Egbert grimly, "heard the story of Adam and Eve? You know, for thousands of years that story has been willfully misinterpreted. I don't think it has any sexual significance or that Eve tempted Adam matters much. No, what it really means is this. If you put down in the middle of a desert, a box marked in huge letters DON'T TOUCH, in five minutes it'll be surrounded by hordes of people fighting to get close enough to touch it. *That's* why people do these things, though they're so dangerous. *That's* why the matoms are going to be the end of us."

IT was not to be expected that Thea could follow that. She had just become a mother, rather to her surprise. She had no illusions about her own intelligence, and she'd always had a vague idea that it took brains to deliver a child. Where she picked that one up, I couldn't say. Perhaps someone who was jealous of her looks had said it.

The first man duly landed on the Moon. Unfortunately he landed much too hard and created another crater. Others followed him; three before anybody landed gently, four before anyone landed and got off again, five before anyone landed, got off again and returned on Earth safely.

"By landing on Earth safely," Uncle Egbert grunted, "he's accomplished only what he would have achieved if he'd never gone." But that was Uncle Egbert in his most reactionary mood, refusing to admit that merely doing something which hadn't been done before was progress.

After the Moon, Mars was easier. Venus was a waste of time. Someone took a dangerous dive close to the Sun and found it was true what the Visitors had said about the sopos . . . there *was* a master plant set up inside Mercury's orbit. At least there was something. Terran spaceships weren't nearly good enough yet to get inside Mercury's orbit—and out again.

The nations started bickering about possessions on the Moon and on Mars. There were threats at various times to drop sopo bombs on Washington, Berlin, London, Paris and Moscow. Half a dozen cold wars were going on at the same time, and the prospects of at least one of them breaking out into a hot war appeared excellent.

"I wonder when the Visitors intend coming back," Uncle Egbert ruminated. "It's an interesting question. If they come too soon, they may arrive right in

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the middle of our sopo war instead of after it, when we're scrabbling about in the ruins—"

"War? You don't think there's going to be a war, do you, Uncle Egbert?" Thea exclaimed, startled. It was apparently the first time the idea had occurred to her. She was about the only person in the world in that position.

"War's the least of it," he grunted. "Look at it this way. Children are viciously destructive sometimes. Haven't you ever noticed Jacky and Meredith fighting?" Thea and I had reproduced ourselves successfully a second time and there were rumors of a third happy event. Jacky was four and Meredith two and a half, and they fought like two five-year-olds. They had inherited beauty and health from Thea and a modicum of intelligence from me.

"Well, if Jacky decides to annihilate Meredith," Uncle Egbert went on, "no real harm is done, because he can't. But imagine if Jacky had a magic ring that would do anything he wanted as soon as he wanted it done. Do you think Meredith would last long?"

"No," said Thea decidedly. "He wouldn't."

"The matoms were magic rings," said Uncle Egbert. "And now we're making magic rings, staffs, gloves and lamps of our own. So long as it's a long and complicated business to work enormous destruction, it may never happen. There's always time for second thoughts. But make the destruction of a city, country, continent or world the work of an unpremeditated instant, and it can't last much longer than—than little Meredith would."

I was a little angry with Uncle Egbert. For Thea went silent and sad and thoughtful, most unlike Thea. He had managed to get an idea through her head, and I wished he hadn't.

HE was right, that was the devil of it. Know how many alarms are given—fire bells rung, police and ambulances called, trains stopped — simply because someone has a fraction of a second of panic?

A switch is a handy, innocuous thing when it merely controls an electric light. But suppose it controls life and death? Suppose any private, ordinary, aberrant, not-too-bright citizen can flip a switch that controls a hundred-thousand horse-power and a billion volts?

"Funny how one can never quite get used to the idea," Uncle Egbert said, "that one may never finish the breath one is just starting to take."

Again he reached his conclu-

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sion before anyone else, and again — though it took a year or two longer—intelligent, informed opinion caught up with him.

We reached the sopo station at last, examined it and made two more like it. These were placed in the same orbit to triple the output. Already we found that what we had considered infinite power was very finite indeed, and wanted more.

We made an underground city on the Moon. Finding that Mars was going to need oxygen replenishment, if we were ever going to be comfortable there, we set up an atmosphere plant.

"Just like that," Uncle Egbert murmured. "If a world hasn't enough air, make it. Isn't it simple and obvious?" However, the atmosphere plant took a lot of power—the whole output of one of the sopo master plants.

We went back and set up two more.

The accident record didn't bear thinking of, so we didn't think of it. We split it up so that it didn't show anywhere as a matom total, so to speak. There were spaceship accidents, accidents on Mars, on the Moon, on Earth; there was sopo damage and loss of life; there were explosions, big and little, all over the place. There were murders, too, more spectacular now that it was so easy to destroy a few square miles of territory in making a good job of the victim. There were crimes made possible by the fact that with modified borers you could get into or out of anything, including bank vaults and prisons.

As Uncle Egbert had said, "There's no denying it — we're children being given dangerous, destructive, disastrous toys."

Jacky and Meredith had a little sister to bully now, Dorothea, but when the three of them were playing even Thea had the sense not to give them knives, pistols, rifles and red-hot pokers. That's what the Visitors had done to us. And knowing what they obviously did about us, they *must* have drawn conclusions about what they were doing.

THEY miscalculated, however. They came back before we had destroyed ourselves, and after we had mastered the last secret of the matoms.

Three of them dropped in on us, casually, without warning, just like the last time. It was Sunday, and our veranda was somewhat crowded, for we were all there . . . Uncle Egbert, Thea, Jacky, Meredith, Dorothea and I.

"Hallo," said Uncle Egbert pleasantly. He could be quite pleasant when he tried. "We've been expecting you. But not so soon."

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I had to hand it to him, he was cool. I'd often wondered if he'd be as bold as he made out when he was really tested. Well, he was.

After all, these were the people who had left us the matoms.

There was a period of confusion after Uncle Egbert spoke, because the Visitors still thought it was like the last time, and it wasn't. Uncle Egbert and I both knew about the interference field now, and how to combat it. Thea didn't, and Jacky and Meredith knew just enough to be thoroughly puzzled and not have the faintest idea what was going on.

The field has an effect not unlike hypnosis. It induces trance in which the victim is open to suggestion. He will believe that what has happened hasn't, that what hasn't happened has, and that what has happened has happened differently. However, hypnosis afterward can't recover the truth. Nor can the field, being essentially erasive, be used to recover it.

Nevertheless, the interference field is effective only when it's unexpected. Knowing about it, having some experience of it, we could resist the suggestion and see things as they were. Much as people can be immune to hypnosis, if they're determined to resist and not co-operate.

"We are just three ordinary-looking people," said the first Visitor, and suddenly they were. His voice was flat and metallic. "With perfectly ordinary voices," he added, and abruptly his voice was perfectly ordinary.

But Uncle Egbert and I refused to believe what we were told, and by a small mental effort saw the Visitors as they really were.

The less said about that the better.

"When we talk to you," Visitor One went on, "you will reject or forget anything in the conversation which seems odd or frightening or astonishing. You will not remember this, for example. You will . . ."

He went on to give instructions which accounted very thoroughly for what had happened the last time and what had been remembered of it . . . forgotten of it, rather. It was very interesting.

AT the end Uncle Egbert said pleasantly, "I hope your . . . *regulations* are all against killing? But I'm sure they are."

Movement among the Visitors seemed to indicate emotion. They were writhing, waving and undulating now, though they had been motionless before.

"Killing?" said Two. "Killing you? Of course. It would be positively revolting to—"

"Good," sighed Uncle Egbert. "Now I feel a lot better."

I did, too. I had been thinking

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of sending the children inside, if the Visitors would let me, but had decided against it. While they were with us, I could see them and the Visitors. If they were out of my sight, I wouldn't be able to stop worrying about what might be happening.

"I also suppose," Uncle Egbert went on, "your *regulations* would all be against instructing us in your technology, or leaving us instruments and machines which we could dismantle?"

"Indeed, yes . . ." said Two, and simultaneously, "You will forget you asked that," said One peremptorily.

"Don't let's pretend any more," said Uncle Egbert blandly.

More writhing, waving and undulation.

"Pretend?" asked Two, and the interference field became perceptibly stronger.

"That you have two arms and two legs, for example," said Uncle Egbert.

"We are just three ordinary-looking people . . ." Three began.

It took them some time to believe that the interference field was having absolutely no effect on Uncle Egbert. Then they believed that it had failed with him and only him, and I had to demonstrate that it had failed with me, too. They didn't go any further than that, fortunately.

After that, all they wanted was to go away. We didn't do anything to stop them.

The next day the papers carried stories in startling contrast to the stories they had carried the first time the Visitors had been here. What had happened the first time—the complete success of their interference-field tactics; our preference for the comparatively worthless things they had probably thrown in just as make-weights; the way we had allowed ourselves to be put exactly where they wanted us—must have been responsible for the enormous confidence which had led them straight to Earth without even making a cautious checkup from a distance.

We had given them a shock, there was no doubt of that.

THIS time the papers carried long, detailed reports and even photographs. The Visitors didn't look so bad in photographs.

Our experience had been typical. Nothing much had happened anywhere except that the Visitors rapidly decided they had the wrong number.

"Notice that this time," said Uncle Egbert, beaming over a newspaper and a soft-boiled egg at Thea and the children, "the Visitors didn't leave matoms, they *took* them. We handed them out very much as they did last time."

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"And after they've examined them and worked out what to do," I said uneasily, "they'll be back."

Uncle Egbert just looked at me. And I saw for myself that they wouldn't be back. Not the people (if you could call them that) who had been looking for an easy mark and had been sure they'd found it. The rapidity with which they got out, when they found the use we had made of the matoms, showed, when you thought of it, that they had given us up as being an easy thing.

Like many a good bet, we had failed to pay off.

Uncle Egbert and I read the papers and tried to answer the children's eager questions.

Presently Thea removed the children to get them off to school.

When they were gone, I saw Uncle Egbert was frowning and felt a stab of apprehension. He had been right so far, sometimes years ahead of the newspapers, and however jubilant the newspapers might be, I'd rather he continued to beam than start to frown.

"You don't think they *will* come back, do you, Uncle Egbert?" I asked.

He sniffed impatiently. "It wouldn't matter in the least if they did," he said. "*They* took specimens this time—and I think it's pretty clear that we've thought of a few things they haven't. If we're not on their technological level or above it, we soon will be."

"Then why look so glum?"

"Why should I look happy? Because the Visitors have been here and gone? That changes nothing. We've nothing to fear from them."

"From them? Then from whom?"

"The scheme's as sound as it ever was," said Uncle Egbert bluntly. "And it'll work out exactly as they meant it to. They came a little early, that's all."

Thea had been clearing away the dishes. She looked in innocent astonishment at him.

"Oh, no, Uncle Egbert," she said. "They came too late."

We both gaped at her.

"It's like the kids being let out of the house when the weather clears up. You know—keep them indoors and they fight and argue. Let them out and they get along fine. It's the same with us. We have the planets instead of being cooped up on just one world."

Uncle Egbert hadn't thought of that, I guess. But he was more amazed because she'd had an idea. That wouldn't have happened if the Visitors had not shown up. If she could, so could anybody. And would!

—J. T. McINTOSH

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PYTHIAS

By FREDERIK POHL

Sure, Larry Connaught saved my life—but it was how he did it that forced me to murder him!

I am sitting on the edge of what passes for a bed. It is made of loosely woven strips of steel, and there is no mattress, only an extra blanket of thin olive-drab. It isn't comfortable; but of course they expect to make me still more uncomfortable.

They expect to take me out of this precinct jail to the District prison and eventually to the death house.

Sure there will be a trial first, but that is only a formality. Not only did they catch me with the smoking gun in my hand and Connaught bubbling to death through the hole in his throat, but I admitted it.

I—knowing what I was doing, with, as they say, malice aforethought — deliberately shot to death Laurence Connaught.

They execute murderers. So they mean to execute me.

Especially because Laurence Connaught had saved my life.

Well, there are extenuating circumstances. I do not think they would convince a jury.

Connaught and I were close friends for years. We lost touch during the war. We met again in Washington, a few years after the war was over. We had, to some extent, grown apart; he had

Illustrated by MEL HUNTER

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become a man with a mission. He was working very hard on something and he did not choose to discuss his work and there was nothing else in his life on which to form a basis for communication. And—well, I had my own life, too. It wasn't scientific research in my case— I flunked out of med school, while he went on. I'm not ashamed of it; it is nothing to be ashamed of. I simply was not able to cope with the messy business of carving corpses. I didn't like it, I didn't want to do it, and when I was forced to do it, I did it badly. So—I left.

Thus I have no string of degrees, but you don't need them in order to be a Senate guard.

DOES that sound like a terribly impressive career to you? Of course not; but I liked it. The Senators are relaxed and friendly when the guards are around, and you learn wonderful things about what goes on behind the scenes of government. And a Senate guard is in a position to do favors—for newspapermen, who find a lead to a story useful; for government officials, who sometimes base a whole campaign on one careless, repeated remark; and for just about anyone who would like to be in the visitors' gallery during a hot debate.

Larry Connaught, for instance. I ran into him on the street one day, and we chatted for a moment, and he asked if it was possible to get him in to see the upcoming foreign relations debate. It was; I called him the next day and told him I had arranged for a pass. And he was there, watching eagerly with his moist little eyes, when the Secretary got up to speak and there was that sudden unexpected yell, and the handful of Central American fanatics dragged out their weapons and began trying to change American policy with gunpowder.

You remember the story, I suppose. There were only three of them, two with guns, one with a hand grenade. The pistol men managed to wound two Senators and a guard. I was right there, talking to Connaught. I spotted the little fellow with the hand grenade and tackled him. I knocked him down, but the grenade went flying, pin pulled, seconds ticking away. I lunged for it. Larry Connaught was ahead of me.

The newspaper stories made heroes out of both of us. They said it was miraculous that Larry, who had fallen right on top of the grenade, had managed to get it away from himself and so placed that when it exploded no one was hurt.

For it did go off—and the flying steel touched nobody. The

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papers mentioned that Larry had been knocked unconscious by the blast. He was unconscious, all right.

He didn't come to for six hours and when he woke up, he spent the next whole day in a stupor.

I called on him the next night. He was glad to see me.

"That was a close one, Dick," he said. "Take me back to Tarawa."

I said, "I guess you saved my life, Larry."

"Nonsense, Dick! I just jumped. Lucky, that's all."

"The papers said you were terrific. They said you moved so fast, nobody could see exactly what happened."

He made a deprecating gesture, but his wet little eyes were wary. "Nobody was really watching, I suppose."

"I was watching," I told him flatly.

He looked at me silently for a moment.

"I was between you and the grenade," I said. "You didn't go past me, over me, or through me. But you were on top of the grenade."

He started to shake his head.

I said, "Also, Larry, you fell *on* the grenade. It exploded underneath you. I know, because I was almost on top of you, and it blew you clear off the floor of the gallery. Did you have a bulletproof vest on?"

HE cleared his throat. "Well, as a matter of—"

"Cut it out, Larry! What's the answer?"

He took off his glasses and rubbed his watery eyes. He grumbled, "Don't you read the papers? It went off a yard away."

"Larry," I said gently, "I was there."

He slumped back in his chair, staring at me. Larry Connaught was a small man, but he never looked smaller than he did in that big chair, looking at me as though I were Mr. Nemesis himself.

Then he laughed. He surprised me; he sounded almost happy. He said, "Well, hell, Dick—I had to tell somebody about it sooner or later. Why not you?"

I can't tell you all of what he said. I'll tell most of it—but not the part that matters.

I'll never tell *that* part to *anybody*.

Larry said, "I should have known you'd remember." He smiled at me ruefully, affectionately. "Those bull sessions in the cafeterias, eh? Talking all night about everything. But you remembered."

"You claimed that the human mind possessed powers of psychokinesis," I said. "You argued

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that just by the mind, without moving a finger or using a machine, a man could move his body anywhere, instantly. You said that nothing was impossible to the mind."

I felt like an absolute fool saying those things; they were ridiculous notions. Imagine a man *thinking* himself from one place to another! But—I had been on that gallery.

I licked my lips and looked to Larry Connaught for confirmation.

"I was all wet," Larry laughed. "Imagine!"

I suppose I showed surprise, because he patted my shoulder.

He said, becoming sober, "Sure, Dick, you're wrong, but you're right all the same. The mind alone can't do anything of the sort—that was just a silly kid notion. But," he went on, "*but* there are—well, techniques—linking the mind to physical forces—simple physical forces that we all use every day—that can do it all. Everything! Everything I ever thought of and things I haven't found out yet.

"Fly across the ocean? In a second, Dick! Wall off an exploding bomb? Easily! You saw me do it. Oh, it's work. It takes energy—you can't escape natural law. That was what knocked me out for a whole day. But that was a hard one; it's a lot easier, for instance, to make a bullet miss its target. It's even easier to lift the cartridge out of the chamber and put it in my pocket, so that the bullet can't even be fired. Want the Crown Jewels of England? I could get them, Dick!"

I asked, "Can you see the future?"

He frowned. "That's silly. This isn't superstì—"

"How about reading minds?"

LARRY'S expression cleared. "Oh, you're remembering some of the things I said years ago. No, I can't do that either, Dick. Maybe, some day, if I keep working at this thing— Well, I can't right now. There are things I can do, though, that are just as good."

"Show me something you can do," I asked.

He smiled. Larry was enjoying himself; I didn't begrudge it to him. He had hugged this to himself for years, from the day he found his first clue, through the decade of proving and experimenting, almost always being wrong, but always getting closer. . . . He *needed* to talk about it. I think he was really glad that, at last, someone had found him out.

He said, "Show you something? Why, let's see, Dick." He looked around the room, then winked. "See that window?"

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I looked. It opened with a slither of wood and a rumble of sashweights. It closed again.

"The radio," said Larry. There was a *click* and his little set turned itself on. "Watch it."

It disappeared and reappeared.

"It was on top of Mount Everest," Larry said, panting a little.

The plug on the radio's electric cord picked itself up and stretched toward the baseboard socket, then dropped to the floor again.

"No," said Larry, and his voice was trembling, "I'll show you a hard one. Watch the radio, Dick. I'll run it without plugging it in! The electrons themselves—"

He was staring intently at the little set. I saw the dial light go on, flicker, and hold steady; the speaker began to make scratching noises. I stood up, right behind Larry, right over him.

I used the telephone on the table beside him. I caught him right beside the ear and he folded over without a murmur. Methodically, I hit him twice more, and then I was sure he wouldn't wake up for at least an hour. I rolled him over and put the telephone back in its cradle.

I ransacked his apartment. I found it in his desk: All his notes. All the information. The secret of how to do the things he could do.

I picked up the telephone and called the Washington police. When I heard the siren outside, I took out my service revolver and shot him in the throat. He was dead before they came in.

FOR, you see, I knew Laurence Connaught. We were friends. I would have trusted him with my life. But this was more than just a life.

Twenty-three words told how to do the things that Laurence Connaught did. Anyone who could read could do them. Criminals, traitors, lunatics — the formula would work for anyone.

Laurence Connaught was an honest man and an idealist, I think. But what would happen to any man when he became God? Suppose you were told twenty-three words that would let you reach into any bank vault, peer inside any closed room, walk through any wall? Suppose pistols could not kill you?

They say power corrupts; and absolute power corrupts absolutely. And there can be no more absolute power than the twenty-three words that can free a man of any jail or give him anything he wants. Larry was my friend. But I killed him in cold blood, knowing what I did, because he could not be trusted with the secret that could make him king of the world.

But I can.

—FREDERIK POHL

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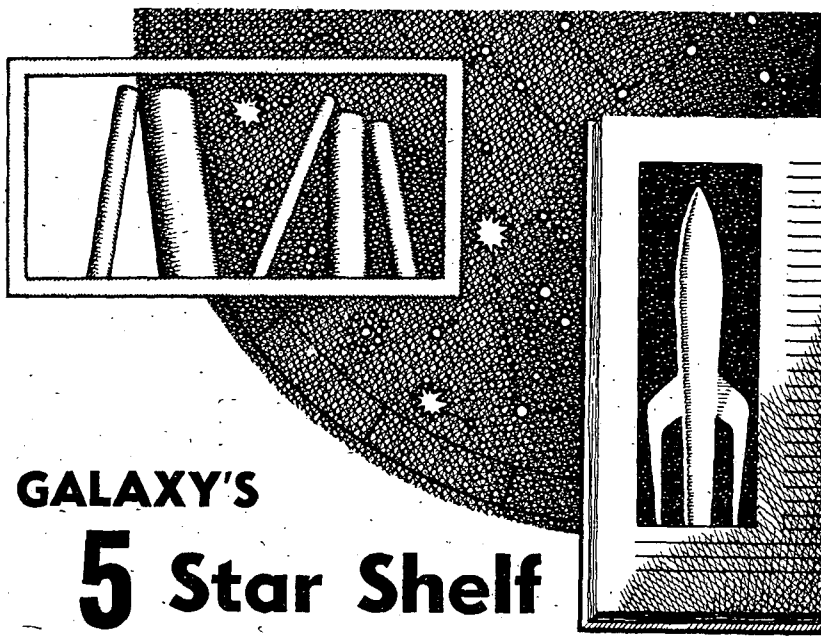

GALAXY'S 5 Star Shelf

SPECIAL Note: The July 1954 issue of a minor journal called *International Record of Medicine and General Practice Clinics* ran a piece by one Robert Plank, Ll.D., M.S.W.—a social worker, for God's sake—on "The Reproduction of Psychosis in Science Fiction." I finished reading it with a feeling that the author thought most science fiction writers (and, by implication, readers, too) were bugs. "Schizomorph" is what he calls the stories, thus accusing the writers of having schizoid personalities, "especially of the paranoid type."

Well, now that science fiction has received a diagnostic accolade, I thought it might be of interest to GALAXY readers to learn what it is their favorite writers seem to be suffering from in the way of barminess. I've just come across a publication that really gives the lowdown in terms of definitions and descriptions of mental conditions. It is called *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Mental Disorders,* and it is published by the American Psychiatric Association, 1785 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington 6, D. C., at $1.50 per copy, available only by mail from them.

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It contains, in pages 12 through 43, the best definitions of the innumerable mental disablements men are heir to that I have ever seen.

From every point of view, the book is a gold mine: a wonderfully informative guide for us s-f readers and a rich source for story plots, character development, etc., for the writing fraternity.

Mention GALAXY when ordering your copy, too, so we can see what sort of response we get to a review this far off the usual track.

ASSIGNMENT IN TOMORROW, edited by Frederik Pohl. Hanover House, $2.95

SIXTEEN short stories and novelets, only four of which I didn't like too well, make the quality of Fred Pohl's third anthology from the s-f magazines rate way up at the top.

Seven of the best items are from GALAXY, the rest from the Competition. Only del Rey's "Helen O'Loy" and Editor Gold's superb "A Matter of Form" have previously been anthologized; the rest are new to book form.

Among the best new ones are Sturgeon's multi-level fable of mob rule called "Mr. Costello, Hero," and Kurt Vonnegut's "The Big Trip Up Yonder," both from GALAXY, and Bester's "5,271,009," from *Fantasy & Science Fiction,* which bears a fascinating resemblance to Sturgeon's "To Here and the Easel," reviewed last month.

Other first-rate tales are by Kornbluth, Williamson, Wilson, Phillips, Bradbury, Brown and Schmitz.

V-2 by Walter Dornberger. Viking Press, $5.00

THIS is probably the most thrilling and impressive book on "space travel" yet published, and certainly one of the most distressing. On the one hand, it is just about the only book on the prototype deep space rocket that has ever been written entirely in the *past* tense. There's very little extrapolation here, you may be sure.

General Dornberger, who was head of the Peenemunde rocket station, tells the actual history of the development of the grandfather of tomorrow's Moon rocket, the V-2 that bombed England. And it is a fantastically vivid, unforgettably real story.

On the other hand, it presents a moral problem that is both fascinating and repulsive.

Dornberger, more than any other man, was responsible for the development of the V-2 as a

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weapon designed strictly for civilian destruction. Plans for it and actual work had begun long before the panzer divisions marched through Poland in 1939, opening World War II.

The general attempts to clear his conscience by saying that in the back of everyone's mind was the V-2's value as a "preliminary" spaceship. The attempt does not ring true. V-2 was a mass-murder weapon from the start and the only reason it did not win the war was the stupid shortsightedness of Hitler et al in refusing all-out support for the Peenemunde establishment.

Willy Ley's introduction is richly informative — in some ways, the most pertinent part of the book, because of its strictly impartial approach.

SHADOWS IN THE SUN by Chad Oliver. Ballantine Books, Inc., $2.00 and 35c

THE theme of alien invasions of our planet is a perennially interesting one, whether it concerns such "nonfiction" as the Flying Saucer cults or such vivid fictions as H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* or the tale here under review.

These two novels are at opposite ends of the spectrum on this theme: Wells with his aliens brutally trying to conquer Earth; Oliver with his completely human invaders trying to keep their presence a deep secret from Earthbound humanity, to live side by side with us without our knowing it.

The Earth hero of the story is a cultural anthropologist named Paul Ellery, who is studying Jefferson Springs, Texas, for a book on the patterns of life in a typical American small town. His suspicions are aroused when he finds out that no resident of the town has lived in it for more than 15 years—although the village itself is many decades old. What he finds is the cause of this odd phenomenon, and how he attempts to cope with his amazing discovery makes a solid, moving and intelligently imaginative tale.

The ending, however, is so inconclusive that one wonders whether the author is not planing a sequel. It demands one, for the present book leaves the situation almost as the hero found it, with the world still sitting on a "bomb" that is much more devastating potentially than a hydrogen bomb ever could be.

It just can't be left like that, Mr. Oliver!

TALES OF OUTER SPACE and ADVENTURES IN THE FAR FUTURE, edited by Donald A. Wolheim. Ace Books, Inc., 35c

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THE new Ace "Double" is an odd one—an anthology of 10 stories with five under one of the above titles and five under the other.

All are new to book publication and, I am afraid, at least half don't deserve it.

Five do, though: Ralph Williams' tale originally called "Bertha;" Cliff Simak's, first published as "Masquerade;" Chad Oliver's excellent "Stardust;" del Rey's "The Wind Between the Worlds" (from this magazine); and Poul Anderson's "Lord of a Thousand Suns," one of two in the collection by this author.

The other five stories range from passably entertaining to not entertaining at all. Nevertheless, for the price, the little book is a good buy.

LUCKY STARR AND THE OCEANS OF VENUS by Paul French. Doubleday & Co., Inc., $2.50

THE third in the "Paul French" (Isaac Asimov) series of space adventures is the best yet —a colorful and exciting tale of weird beings and doings on a Venus conceived by the author to be entirely covered with deep oceans under its thus-far-impenetrable cloud canopy.

The notion of a "wet" Venus is an old one, and though most modern astronomers seem to believe that the planet actually is all desert, their point has not been proven and probably won't be until we actually visit our neighbor world.

In any event, the author's concept of human colonies on the bottom of the Venusian sea is a rich one and his development of the melodramatic plot is swift and sure. It's a real thriller for fans of all ages.

THE SCIENCE FICTION SUBTREASURY by Wilson Tucker. Rinehart & Co., $2.75

I DON'T know what's wrong with me. Old age? Contrariness? Anyhow, I have to confess that I just can't make contact with most of these ten Tucker tales. It can't be Tucker's fault, so it must be mine. Or is it?

I found all but two or three of the stories almost empty and some of them rather weak parallels of stories by other writers.

I did enjoy "Able to Zebra," "Exit" and "The Job Is Ended" (even though its conclusion is confusing and unsatisfactory). But the rest, I regret to say, left me quite cold.

THREE THOUSAND YEARS by Thomas Calvert McClary. Fantasy Press, Inc., $3.00

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IT is beyond my comprehension why this 1938 serial should now be awkwardly updated on the "scientific" side and put on the market at this particular time, for it is anti-science science fiction of the most appalling sort.

Ruthless free-enterpriser Simon Drega is the hero; brilliant but vain and sociologically infantile Simon Gamble is the scientist-villain. Gamble puts the whole world into suspended animation for 3,000 years (he wasn't even a good scientist; he'd meant the period to be only 75 years!) and when the people come to, the physical plant of civilization has naturally rotted almost entirely away. All but a handful of people are killed as they try to get out from under the wreckage.

Gamble tries to build a "pure-science" society on the ruins—and fails, of course. Drega builds a "survival-of-the-fittest" society by the use of "rough shod" (blurb adjective) methods like those of a particularly nasty construction boss—and succeeds, natchmente.

This is a book from the Paleolithic Period of modern s-f. It never should have been exhumed.

BRIEF *Notes.* If you missed the hardbound editions of Arthur C. Clarke's *Against the Fall of Night* or his excellent nonfiction *The Exploration of Space,* you can now get them in paperback editions—the first a Permabook Star at 25c and the second a Pocket Book Cardinal at 35c. Wonderful buys, both of them . . . For owners of Don Day's invaluable *Index to the Science Fiction Magazines,* 1926-1950, the compiler has turned out an errata sheet which they can have on request from The Perri Press, Box 5007, Portland 13, Ore. A useful addition to the book it is, too. And if you don't have the *Index* (and you should) it still is available from the same source at $5.00 a copy . . . For devotees of Lord Dunsany's later work in the "Jorkens" series, The Devin-Adair Company has published a surprising treat, a selection of 16 of the best items from his early volumes of poetic fairy tales and supernatural stories, mostly written before 1920. It's too bad, though, that the book does not contain any of the exquisite drawings by S. H. Sime which appeared in the original volumes. Those in the new book, by Robert Barrell, are considerably inferior. The book is called *The Sword of Welleran,* and it costs $3.00.

Don't miss it!

—GROFF CONKLIN

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BLIND SPOT

By BASCOM JONES, JR.

Everyone supported the Martian program—until it struck home!

JOHNNY STARK, director of the department of Interplanetary Relations for Mars' Settlement One, reread the final paragraph of the note which he had found on his desk, upon returning from lunch earlier in the day.

His eye flicked rapidly over the the moistly smeared Martian scrawl, ignoring the bitterness directed at him in the first paragraphs. He was vaguely troubled by the last sentences. But he hadn't been able to pin the feeling down.

. . . . Our civilization predates that of Earth's by millions of years. We are an advanced, peaceful race. Yet, since Earth's first rocket landed here thirteen years ago, we have been looked upon as freaks and contemptuously called 'bug-men' behind our backs! This is our planet. We gave of our far-advanced knowledge and science freely, so that Earth would be a better place. We asked nothing in return, but we were rewarded by having forced upon us foreign ideas of government, religion, and behavior. Our protests have

Illustrated by KOSSIN

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been silenced by an armed-police and punitive system we've never before needed. Someday you will awaken to this injustice. On that day in your life, you have my sympathy and pity!

Stark knew that the Settlement's Investigations Lab could readily determine the identity of the Martian who had written the note. But he hesitated to send it over. Under the New System, such troublemakers were banished to the slave-labor details of the precious-earth mines to the North.

Crumpling the note in sudden decision, Stark dropped it into the office incendiary tube. The morning visi-report had shown that there were more than 17,000 workers at the mines. Only five had been Earthlings. Let the armed-police system find the Martian through their own channels. It wasn't his job.

A GLANCE at the solar clock on the far wall reminded him there was still time for one more interview before the last bell, so he impatiently signaled his secretary to send in the waiting couple.

Ordinarily, he liked his work and time meant little to him. He had jumped from interpreter to director in the ten years since the department had been created. But this day was different.

Stark was to announce his engagement at the Chief's monthly dinner party that evening and time had seemed to drag since his lunch with Carol.

When the door opened, he rose and nodded to the plump, freckled-faced girl who entered. The girl topped five feet by one or two inches, but she was no taller than the Martian man who followed her at the prescribed four feet.

After the girl had seated herself, Stark and the Martian sat down. Stark opened the folder, which his secretary had placed on his desk earlier.

"Your names are Ruth and Ralph Gilraut? And you want permission to move into Housing Perimeter D?" It was merely a formality, since the information was in the folder.

When the girl nodded, Stark placed a small check mark in the space beside her name. Then he turned to the Martian.

The large, single red eye set deep in the Martian's smooth, green forehead above the two brown ones blinked twice before he answered.

He spoke deliberately. "As is required of all Martians under the New System, I have taken the name of one of the early Earthlings to write and pronounce." The large red eye blink-

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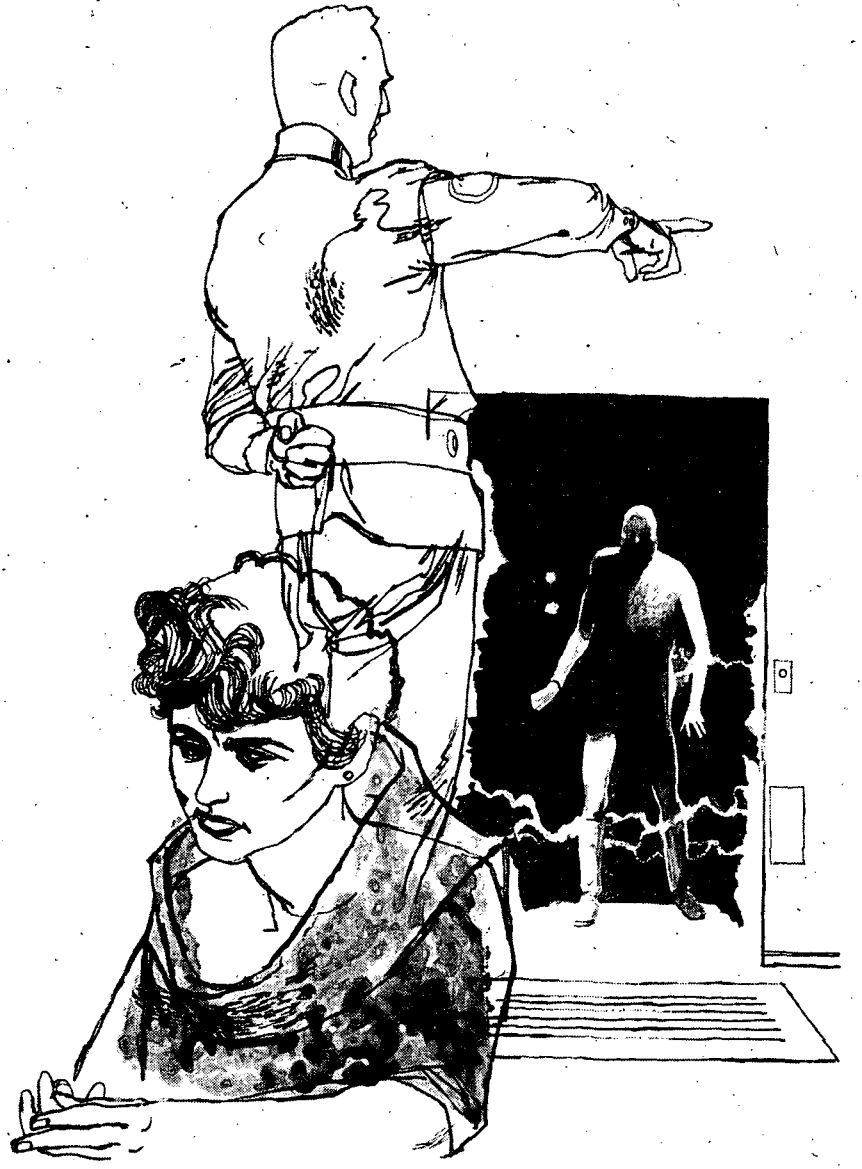

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ed again. "My wife would like to move into Housing Perimeter D. By regulation, I respect her wish."

Stark placed a check mark by the Martian's name. He wiped the smudge of ink off his hand and said, "You both know, of course, that Perimeter D is reserved for couples who have intermarried and are about to have offspring?"

The girl and the Martian nodded, and the girl passed Stark a medical report. Stark looked over the report and then made a notation on a small pink slip.

He said, "This permit certifies that you are eligible to move from Perimeter E to Housing Perimeter D. It also certifies that your husband has no record as a troublemaker." Stark looked at the girl. "You understand that you may visit your friends in Perimeter E, but, by law, they will not be allowed to enter Perimeter D to visit you. And, of course, the new law clearly states that neither of you may visit Earthlings in Housing Perimeter A, B or C."

The girl looked down at her hands. Her voice was almost inaudible. "My husband and I are familiar with the advantages and disadvantages listed under the section pertaining to intermarriage in the new law, Mr. Stark. Thank you."

STARK rose as they left. For a brief moment, he thought he had detected a sense of rebellion in their attitude. But that was not possible.

The new law provided equality for all. And his department had been created to iron out relations between the two races—excepting complaints originated by troublemakers for the purpose of weakening the New System. In such cases, Investigations had stepped in and the Martian or Earthling troublemaker had been sent to the rare-earths mines.

The reddish light filtering in through the quartz and lead wall of his office showed that it was almost time for the last bell.

On the street below, shoppers were streaming out of the stores on their way to the various housing perimeters.

Earthlings were climbing into their speedy little jet cars for the short trip to the recently modernized inner perimeters. Martians were waiting for the slower auto buses. The traffic problem had been solved, under the New System, by restricting the use of the Martian-built jet cars to persons living in the inner perimeters.

As Stark watched, a black jet car impatiently hurtled out of the line of traffic, bowled through a crowd of Martians waiting for an auto bus, and skidded to a

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stop at the curb in front of the building.

A tall girl got out. The red evening glow reflecting from her golden hair, made her breathing globe almost amber. Male Martians and Earthlings alike turned to stare in appreciation as she pushed her way through the crowd to the building's compressor lock. Carol was that kind of girl.

ALMOST at the exact moment that Carol opened the door into Stark's office, the yellow visi-screen of the vocal box upon Stark's desk flashed on brilliantly and the Chief's booming voice filled the office. The light from the screen picked up the highlights on the furniture and gave a sallow, greenish cast to Stark's features. Carol stepped back into the doorway to stay out of range of the two-way unit.

"Stark!" The automatic tuner on the box corrected to bring the Chief's image in wire-sharp focus.

"Yes, sir?"

"About the dinner tonight. Just checking to make sure you're planning to be there. We want a full turnout. An inspection team has come up from Earth and we have two visiting dignitaries from Venus."

Stark nodded and waited for the Chief to say something else, but the visi-screen blanked out.

Carol said, "That was Dad, wasn't it?"

Stark felt very depressed suddenly. "Haven't you told him yet?"

"No. He's been tied up with those inspectors all afternoon. And you know how Dad is, Johnny. There's a right and a wrong time to tell him things. Right now, he's only interested in hearing about Earth."

"But we're supposed to announce our engagement tonight at the dinner." He shook his head. "We can't go on forever with just a few stolen moments here and there, eating an occasional lunch or third meal together in little out-of-the-way places."

Carol laughed, the youthful swell of her breasts against the soft, spun-glass material of her blouse. "Don't worry so, Johnny! I'm a big girl now. This is my eighteenth birthday. Dad's bark is much worse than his bite. I'll tell him about us on the way home."

She moved closer to him, until he could feel the warmth of her body. He could see the warm, damp indentation where her breathing globe had rested against her shoulders and chest.

She asked teasingly, "What did you get me for my birthday, Johnny? Something real nice?"

"What did you want?" Johnny asked her gently.

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AND suddenly she wasn't teasing any more. She put her arms around him. "Dad and my brother would say I'm crazy. But all I want, Johnny, is you. Just you! You know that."

Stark had picked out her birthday present, but he wanted it to be a surprise for that night. He said, "I already saw one of your presents. A black jet car!"

"How did you know that?"

"I saw you drive up in it a few minutes ago."

Carol giggled. "Dad gave it to me. Did you see me plow through that crowd waiting for the auto bus?"

"Did your brother send you anything?"

She nodded. "Three new outfits from Earth. They were on the same liner that brought the inspection team to the Settlement this morning. Oh, yes, and the captain of the liner brought me this."

She showed him the tiny pin she wore attached to her collar. The pin itself was a carefully wrought but cruel caricature of an awkward buglike creature. A small ruby set in the center of its face served as its eye.

Stark frowned. "Carol, you shouldn't be wearing that." He reached up and unpinned it. "That's the sort of thing our department is fighting."

"But the captain said it was the latest rage back on Earth. They're even making toys like it. I'm sure they're not designed to . . . to poke fun at anyone."

Stark started to say something, but the last bell interrupted him. He said, "If you're going to take your father home and tell him about us before the dinner, you'd better hurry. I'll come early."

Carol kissed him and said good-by. She left the pin on Stark's desk and was smiling at him as she closed the door.

AFTER waiting until the first rush of workers had gone and the building was quiet, Stark caught the elevator down. The overhead lights in the compressor lock were reflected in the twin rows of breathing globes. The green-tinted ones had to be used by Martians in the building, and the clear ones were used by Earthmen when they were outside in the Martian atmosphere.

Stark stopped in at a little open shop down one of the many side streets. The sign said "Closed," but he rang the bell until a little, dried-up Martian appeared.

The storekeeper handed him a small box. Stark opened it to examine the ring—Carol's birthday present. The single, large diamond set in the thin precious-metal band dated back to an all-but-forgotten custom practiced on Earth. Stark thought the

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engagement ring would please Carol, though.

Standing in the compressor lock at the Chief's home later, Stark rubbed the diamond against the sleeve of his tunic. He fumbled with his breathing globe and then pushed the button that activated the door. The tele-guard beyond the opening door scanned him rapidly. As he stepped forward, a red light above the tele-guard flashed on and the door began to close again.

Stark threw all his strength against the door and squeezed through into the house.

Throughout the house, Stark could hear the alarm bell. A taped voice, activated by the tele-guard, said, "Do not enter! Do not enter!"

He found Carol and the Chief in the library alone. Nearly purple with rage, the Chief drew himself up to his full six feet.

The Chief bellowed, "Stark! Are you crazy?"

The growing feeling of sickness spread through Stark.

"Who do you think you are?" the Chief yelled. "Get back to your office and consider yourself under arrest as a troublemaker. Give you people an inch and you try to walk away with everything. Why, I wouldn't let you touch my daughter if you were the last living being in the Universe!"

Carol didn't look up. She stood through it all, silently, without moving. Stark knew now where his blind spot had been. He turned and left them.

BACK at his office, he waited for the police. Stark stared down at his reflection in the polished top of the desk. A yellow, moist film of sweat covered his face. The red eye set in his forehead blinked. But the pain visible just behind the surface of that eye was not over Carol or himself.

The pain was for what he was seeing for the first time . . . now.

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rich living

No other planet in the entire Galaxy was at all like Rejuvenal . . . it was the only world worth one's whole fortune for a short visit!

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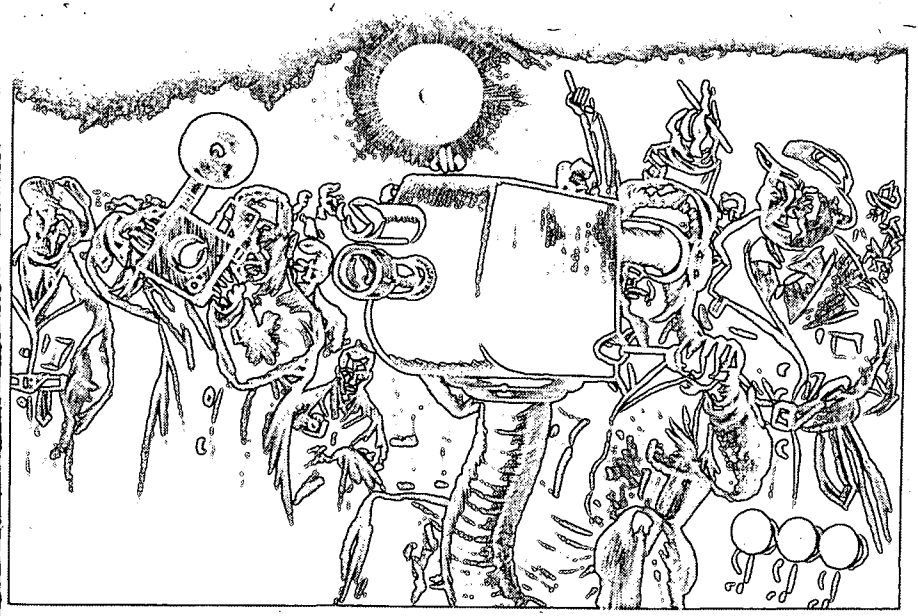
By MICHAEL CATHAL

Illustrated by MEL HUNTER

CURTIS Delman was the last to leave the space liner. It was only when the Captain entered that he ceased dictating and put down the microphone. Then, with the clumsy deliberation of the aged, he pressed home the lid of the recorder and turned the key in the lock. There was almost a mile of fine wire in that box—a mile of detailed instruction, compiled over the past four days. For a centenarian, his energy was prodigious.

The Captain stood respectfully



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by the door, waiting to be noticed. Delman beckoned him into the suite.

Hat in hand, the Captain walked over to the desk. "I thought you'd like to know, sir, the rest of the passengers have disembarked." He spoke with deference.

"Good," said Delman. "I shan't delay you more than a few minutes longer."

"Oh, no delay, I assure you, sir," the Captain replied hastily. "Only too happy to be of service. The crew asked me to thank you on their behalf, sir, for your great generosity. It was more than—er—generous." Words seemed to fail him.

"Not at all, Captain," Delman said. "You've all done your best to make the crossing as comfortable as possible and I'm very grateful to you. Perhaps you'd do one more thing for me on your return—deliver this to my representative in London." He pointed to the recording machine.

"Certainly, sir."

"Then that takes care of everything." The great lawyer rose creakily to his feet. Though bent with age, he was still an impressive figure, tall and powerfully built, his white hair spilling out over the massive forehead. "I suppose the press is here?"

"I'm afraid so, sir."

"Well, one can't dodge them on Jupiter. There's no room to move as it is."

THE Captain laughed sympathetically. No one knew better than himself the limitations of the planet. He'd lived here as a child, grown up under that plastic bubble which Man had built to preserve an atmosphere—two thousand acres of habitable land in a wilderness of millions of square miles. It was enough to break the heart of any boy.

Delman stooped to pick up his two heavy canes. The Captain leaped forward and handed them to him. Then lawyer and skipper left the suite and moved slowly toward the gangway. As they reached the steps, the Captain broke the silence.

"It's been a privilege to have you on board, sir, and perhaps we may hope to take you home again on your return from Rejuvenal."

Curtis Delman smiled. "Well, Captain, it's foolhardy for me to plan nearly two years ahead, but I hope so, too."

They shook hands.

With a steward supporting him on either side, the ancient lawyer climbed carefully down the steps.

A spacelines official had thoughtfully provided a chair. He sat down. The usual array of microphones and tele-cameras

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was grouped around him. Someone appealed for silence. In the hush that followed, only his own persuasive voice was heard.

"I have no prepared statement," he said, "but I assume you gentlemen wish to ask me some questions. In that event, I'd just like to stress that I'm not as young as I used to be—or perhaps I should say, *as I hope to be*—and I'd be obliged if you kept them short and to the point."

There were about thirty reporters present and among them he recognized several faces that he had seen before. A few would belong to the local network, but most of them were probably attached to one of the Universal syndicates. It was a red-headed youngster who got in the first question; the others were quick to follow.

"Is it true, sir, that this will be your fourth visit to Rejuvenal?"

"Yes, perfectly true."

"Has anyone else been there four times?"

"No. To the best of my knowledge, I'm the first person to attempt it. Several others have been at least twice."

"Because no one else could afford it?"

"I didn't say that. Most people tire of life. I don't."

Years of experience had accustomed the lawyer to these interviews. The purring cameras failed to distract him. In fact, he almost relished the buzz of competent confusion around him.

"How long does the trip take?"

"Two hundred and fifty days out, the same back, and ninety days on the planet."

"Don't you find that a tedious journey?"

"Long, yes. Tedious, no. Don't forget, one has expectations. Besides, the early trips from Earth to Jupiter took twice as long."

"Now they take four days."

"No doubt, but that doesn't alter the argument."

"Mr. Delman, what is the speed of change?"

"You mean the rate at which the burden of years drops from one's shoulders?"

"Yes, sir."

"Almost exactly one year for every twenty-four hours spent on the planet."

"So that, in ninety days, you're ninety years younger?"

"Correct."

"How old are you now, sir?"

DELMAN scratched his head reflectively. The reporters laughed.

"That's a difficult question. So far as natural decay is concerned, I think I'm a hundred and fifteen. Of course, my actual life-

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span has been nearer three hundred and eighty-seven; but please don't credit me with being a Methuselah. I've a long way to go yet."

"Is it a fact that the round trip costs five million dollars?"

"I'm afraid I can't answer that. It's a condition of the contract that passengers refrain from disclosing the price of their tickets."

"It is expensive, though?"

"Oh, naturally. But remember, the overhead is heavy. Three refueling bases on the minor planets, Borenius, Ziar and Algon, require constant maintenance, apart from the initial cost of runways. Then only five—er—patients can be housed on Rejuvenal at any given time. And one also has to consider the constant change of staff. You'd scarcely expect it to be cheap."

There was a sudden pause in the questioning. The lawyer took the opportunity to rise up out of his chair. This provoked an immediate response; all spoke at once in deafening unison. Delman held up his hand for silence, then turned and addressed the red-headed reporter on his left.

"Young man, since you were the first to begin this examination, I'll give you two questions with which to wind up for your side. Only two, mind."

The reporter thought for a moment. "Who are your fellow passengers?" he asked.

"I don't know. I thought *you* might be able to tell me that. And the second question?"

"Well, sir, I suppose I ought to ask whether you have any special message for the Universe."

Curtis Delman chuckled. "No," he said, "nothing of importance. Just that I'd be glad if the law remained substantially unaltered during my absence. It's hard enough to keep abreast as things are. Now if you'll excuse me, gentlemen—"

The tele-cameras swiveled as, cane in each hand, he hobbled toward the Terminal Building. Security officers cleared a path for him. A group of onlookers began to applaud. It was a reception more in keeping with a politician than a lawyer, but Curtis Delman held a unique position.

He had been the acknowledged leader of his profession for over three hundred years—a record no politician could ever hope to equal.

THE Vice President of Rejuvenal Enterprises, Inc., had been speaking for the best part of half an hour. He was a dapper little man whose white tunic was fringed with green and purple. He had a slight Venusian accent, very bookish, very precise and

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very irritating. All five passengers sat in his office and waited with varying degrees of patience for the departure signal.

Curtis Delman had been introduced to each of them in turn. Of the four, only Walter Pellinger, President of Galactic Stores, had made a previous trip. The lawyer knew of him by reputation as a shrewd businessman, but there was little to be said in favor of his disposition, which was rumored to be morose and unfriendly. Certainly his appearance was surly enough to support the rumor.

"Of course," the Vice President was saying, "Mr. Curtis Delman and Mr. Pellinger have heard all this before, but I'm sure they'll both forgive me for repeating it." Walter Pellinger mumbled something uncomplimentary. "And now for a last word about the ship. Most of you will have come here by space liner, and very comfortable it is, too. Unfortunately, we can't look after you that well. Not only would it be uneconomical to employ a liner, it would also be impossible—there just aren't the landing facilities. And if you can't land, there's not much point in going, is there?" The Vice President laughed at his little joke. No one else seemed to find it amusing.

"No," he continued, "the best we can provide is a Stellano-type spaceboat—the very latest model, naturally—but, even so, I'm afraid the men will have to share berths. Of course, there's plenty of room in the lounge. As for the staff, Captain Ross, who is to look after you, is a man of considerable—"

The Vice President rambled on. Curtis Delman ceased listening to him; it was only because he had heard his name mentioned that his interest had been drawn in the first place. He focused his attention on the three remaining passengers.

They were a strangely assorted trio. Of the two men, one was extravagantly attired in dark-blue silk, obviously hand-woven, with large sapphire rings on the fingers of both hands, and a slim, eight-dial chronometer on the left wrist. Despite his advanced age, his face remained lean and swarthy, the eyes set close above a strong hooked nose, the lips taut and cruel.

He'd been introduced as Jason Tarsh. The lawyer seemed to associate the name with a criminal case—something to do with smuggling—but the details eluded him.

The other was ordinary and ill at ease, a plump, red-faced man in a badly cut tweed tunic who looked out of place in the present company. His knuckles rapped nervously on the elbow-rest of

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his chair. Clearly, Mr. John Bridge had none of that confidence usually acquired by the millionaire. Yet only a wealthy man could afford the trip. Curtis Delman was puzzled.

And then there was the woman.

IT was difficult to believe that the third and last of his fellow-passengers was Gillian Murray. She sat by herself in the far corner, a formless, shrunken creature in deep black. He remembered seeing her, eighty years ago, on the stage of the Palladia. She had been shapely and vivacious in those days. Now only a faint sparkle lingered in her eyes. There was nothing to suggest that she had once been the toast of the Universe. Old, withered, gray-haired — time treated beauty harshly, mercilessly. He realized how much this trip must mean to her.

"Unlike Jupiter," the Vice President was saying, "this section of the Galaxy is composed of oxygen planets. In fact, the proportion of oxygen is rather higher than on Earth, so you needn't bother about spacesuits and the like. I remember—"

A green light blinked on the Vice President's desk, stemming the flood of reminiscence. It was the embarkation signal.

The Vice President rose. "It only remains," he said, "to wish you all a very happy and successful journey."

The handshaking over, the five passengers filed out onto the escalator. Below them, by the side of the Terminal Building, lay the spaceboat, a slim, cone-shaped vessel, gleaming in the artificial light. They all tottered on board.

Clearance was granted almost immediately. Slowly, they passed through the main airlock and into the open. It was dark outside and only the change in elevation told them that they were climbing the launching ramp. Behind them, the huge inverted bowl of the city glowed in hermetic splendor. Movement ceased. The warning indicator flashed on: LIE BACK AND FASTEN SAFETY HARNESS. A steward checked their positions.

They lay, tensed and motionless, waiting for the sudden thrust that would hurl them into space.

IT was the two-hundred-and-twentieth day.

As Curtis Delman returned to consciousness, his first feeling was of relief. The cumulative strain of one takeoff after another could prove disastrous. It was one of the drawbacks to a spaceboat that the effect of rapid acceleration should be so marked.

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In a liner, the takeoff was little more than an inconvenience—and, despite exhaustive tests, there was no telling how an old heart would react to a series of blackouts. Now the danger no longer existed, for in thirty days they would arrive at Rejuvenal. As for the journey back, he would make it with the heart of a young man.

He unclipped the safety harness and lowered his legs over the side of the bunk.

He had no wish to remain in his cabin. It was too small for comfort, though, like all Stellano products, superbly designed. Not an inch had been wasted. Personal luggage was stowed under the bunk, cupboards were built in, tables folded back and even the basin was retractable. Every conceivable necessity had been crammed into a few square feet.

When he reached the lounge, he found the others already seated.

There were two vacant chairs, one next to John Bridge, the other between Tarsh and Pellinger. He chose the former.

"So you survived?" said Pellinger. He sounded disappointed.

"Yes, I survived," replied Delman. "And since we appear to be exercising our powers of observation, I hope the same may be said of you?"

Gillian Murray laughed. Walter Pellinger opened his mouth as if to make some retort, then thought better of it, and turned back to the vidar screen.

The screen took up most of the far wall. The image in focus was the scene behind them. In the center, like a giant grapefruit, hung the planet Algon—a world of water with a few islands dotting the surface of an ocean—while anchored in space, some hundreds of miles above, lay a small satellite.

"That's a funny one," said John Bridge.

The lawyer smiled. He'd grown to like Bridge. The mystery of his wealth had been discovered months ago—he'd won a sweepstake fortune. That and his own meager savings had together proved just sufficient to buy him a new lease of life. His family hadn't liked the idea; but, as he'd pointed out to them, it was his money and what use was it to him if he was too old to enjoy it? The simplicity and good nature of the man came as a refreshing change from the sullenness of Pellinger and the cynicism of Jason Tarsh.

"It's a radio-platform," Delman explained.

SOMETIMES it seemed almost incredible that John Bridge had never left the Earth. He was a Londoner by birth and,

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before this trip, had traveled no farther than New York. To him, everything they saw and did was a new adventure.

"But we don't have radio-platforms back home," Bridge said. "Why do they need them here?"

"In our own solar system," Delman told him, "there's an interplanetary link-up—an expensive business—but we did have them four hundred years ago. Out here, it's not worth the cost. The platform acts as a go-between. It can intercept messages and pass them down to the spacedrome on Algon, or it can transmit to a spaceship in flight. But direct contact between spaceship and spacedrome is impossible, because the ionized layer of the atmosphere deflects the radio waves."

"I see. Is there one over Rejuvenal, then?"

"I don't think so. At least, there wasn't when I was last there. It doesn't really warrant it. There's only the house and a small landing-ground. And a spaceboat arrives and departs every thirty days, so nothing can happen."

"What about boots? Do we have to wear them?"

"You mean gravity-boots?" Delman asked.

Walter Pellinger scowled irritably and shifted his position. "Yes, I suppose so—those heavy things we wore on Borenius and Ziar."

Delman shook his head. "No, curiously enough, we don't. It's only a tertiary planet—less than one-eighth of Earth's volume—but its specific gravity is enormous. Rejuvenite, the rock it's composed of, is one of the heaviest minerals ever discovered. They say—"

"Look, Delman," Walter Pellinger interrupted, "let that blasted man wear his boots, if he wants to. I'm sure I don't care. But for heaven's sake, stop this geological survey! It's bad enough being cooped up in this tub without having to listen to a lot of nursery small-talk."

"Gosh, I'm sorry, Mr. Pellinger—" John Bridge began.

"I wasn't talking to you," said Pellinger curtly, "but, since you've chosen to butt in, I'll say this—you don't belong here. You're a stupid, ignorant lout, and if you worked in any of my stores, which could never happen in the first place, I'd fire you on the spot and the idiot who hired you, too."

"Aren't you being a little unjust?" Curtis Delman spoke softly, but there was an edge of underlying menace in his voice.

THIS was the first time Walter Pellinger had overstepped the boundaries of acceptable behav-

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ior. That he despised John Bridge, he had made clear from the beginning. Now he had come into the open. They all looked at him. Tarsh, who was nearest, seemed to find it amusing.

"I've got nothing against you, Delman." Pellinger picked his words carefully. "You worked your passage like the rest of us, but *that* fellow—" he pointed toward John Bridge— "has no right to be here at all. He's a nitwit and a nobody. You're a success and I'm a success. It's not luck, Delman; we both have ability. Call it natural selection, if you like.

"Darwin did. We've fought for the chance to prolong our lives and, by doing so, we're able to marry again and have children and pass that ability down to them. Why, our lives are *essential* to the human race!"

"I should have thought there were sufficient chain-store magnates," said Tarsh.

Walter Pellinger turned on him. "Don't tempt me, Jason. Your activities on Neptune and Arcturus won't bear close investigation."

Jason Tarsh smiled and remained silent. There was little humor in his smile. That last remark had done much to heighten his opinion of Walter Pellinger.

"To return to my point," Pellinger continued, "that man won a sweepstake. He's here not because he's intelligent, but because he's lucky, the somethng-for-nothing principle. A fat lot of use that is to the Universe. Why, his descendants will be as stupid as himself and there's no room for the manual laborer in this Age. It's an intolerable waste."

"If I thought you believed any of that," said Delman, "I should be the first to respect your feelings. But we've been 'cooped up' together, to use your expression, for seven months and I know you better than your shareholders do. Oh, yes, you can put it across at a Board Meeting, this lofty idea of self-sacrifice and the sum of human good; but it isn't true and you know it. You're here for the same reason I'm here—because you're afraid to die. And that goes for all of us." He looked at each of them in turn, as if daring them to contradict him. "Yes, we've got ability, all right, and self-confidence. But what do we do with these fancied qualities? We use them to make money with which to buy back our youth."

DELMAN got to his feet and hobbled over toward the vidar screen. He stood with his back to the screen, looking down on them.

"And what do we do with our youth?" he asked. "We use *that*

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to make money for our old age. We have no choice. Not only is the price of rejuvenation extortionate in itself, but also, by a whim of the legislature, we are declared dead and the burden of 'death duty' falls on our estates. When we return, we return poor. And so the cycle continues—the endless quest for money, the means of perpetual preservation.

"We are careers, not men and women!" the lawyer went on vehemently. "We don't enjoy life. We have neither the time nor the courage to enjoy it. Our children are few and we ignore them, for should they inherit this terrible urge, they would be our competitors. No, Mr. Pellinger, there is only one real man among us and that is John Bridge. He alone has enjoyed life and he goes back determined to enjoy it for a second and last time. But we, by dint of work and learning and sharp-practice, may prolong the agony once again. Ours are the wasted lives."

"Oh, Mr. Delman! Surely, that's overstating the case?" Gillian Murray had the reedy voice common to so many elderly spinsters. "What about all those difficult problems you've solved? Many of them are of great importance. Everybody says so."

"Then I don't agree with everybody, Miss Murray," Delman replied. "Complications are the bread and butter of my trade. We make them for money and we unravel them for more money. One day, you draft a will; the next, you break a Trust deed —the balance remains even. It's true you perform a function, but it's questionable whether that function is of any real value."

John Bridge got up from his chair. His rubicund features were creased in bewilderment.

"This is beyond me," he said. "I'm sorry if I annoyed Mr. Pellinger. I didn't mean to. I think I'll take a nap."

He walked thoughtfully out into the corridor, a book in his left hand, his right arm stretched out to the handrail overhead.

"There's something about Mr. Bridge," Gillian Murray said reflectively, "that reminds me of the Statue of Liberty."

"Probably the hollow head," said Jason Tarsh.

IT was ninety years since the lawyer had last seen Rejuvenal. And now, after all those decades of unremitting toil, he saw it again—a small purple blob on the vidar screen, a hundred thousand miles away—a blob that would grow and grow until it filled the entire screen. Soon the distant harmony of light and shade would break up, throwing into relief the jagged peaks and plunging crevices that formed the

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surface of the planet.

He watched it, fascinated, wondering whether this approach was to be his last, or whether he would be asking himself the same questions a thousand years to come. Perhaps it was this moment above all others that made the endless months of scraping and self-sacrifice suddenly worthwhile.

"It won't run away," said a voice beside him. He turned his head. Gillian Murray stood there, wrinkled and benign, her keen blue eyes regarding him with quizzical humor.

"I'm so sorry," he said. "I didn't know you were here."

"Oh, don't apologize, Mr. Delman. It's just that you've seen it all before, so I'm the one who should be excited."

The lawyer nodded. "Yes," he admitted, " you've got something to be excited about. Years ago, longer than either of us would want to remember, I saw you on the stage. It was one of the important moments in my life. You see, before then, I'd always regarded 'beauty' and 'perfection' as abstract qualities. I was wrong. Are you going back to the theatre?"

Gillian Murray paused for a moment. "No," she replied finally. "I did intend to and, after your flattery, I almost feel I should, but I've been thinking over what you said a few weeks back—you know, about us being careers rather than flesh and blood. Mind you, I don't agree completely; we're not as bad as all that. No, it's more the feeling that I've lived one sort of life and it would be stupid to repeat the same thing over again. This time, I'd like to marry and have a family and settle down—all the ordinary things. Does that sound sensible?"

"Very sensible," said Curtis Delman.

THEIR eyes strayed back to the vidar screen. The planet had grown larger. Already it was possible to make out the rippling serrulation of contours. Another hour and the spaceboat would rest motionless on the purple rock.

"Somehow it's frightening—" Gillian Murray shivered— "the idea that Nature can work back to front, reverse the aging process."

"It's not an idea," he said. "It's a fact."

"Yes, I know," she replied, "but it's still uncanny. I've so many doubts. I mean will I really look the same? And my mind? Oh, they've told me there's no change—but there *must* be!" She buried her head in her hands.

Delman looked at her with

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compassion. "You needn't worry," he said. "Nothing can go wrong. The memory remains unimpaired; it's only the ability to make use of it that suffers—the knowledge is at your disposal. You'll be just like other young people, heedless and disinclined to profit from experience. You see, the mind is like a machine; you press the right buttons and it draws the right conclusion. The buttons are the facts to be considered and their selection is a matter of judgment. When we're young, our judgment is often at fault. When we're very young, we can't reason at all. There's nothing to fear—only youthful exuberance."

Before she could answer, the loudspeaker buzzed twice. There was a moment of silence, broken by the voice of Captain Ross.

"Attention, please! Attention, please! Will all passengers kindly retire to their cabins. The forward jets will be fired in exactly five minutes. I repeat, will all passengers—"

IT was cool on the veranda, though outside, an alien sun beat down on the smooth expanse of runway, a narrow platform, less than a mile in length—the only flat stretch of land on the planet. Along the far edge, mountains, bathed in sunlight, rose in barren splendor, their sharp peaks reaching for the sky, while, on each remaining side, the ground dropped sheer away, to reform itself in twisting valleys thousands of feet below.

The house, two stories of prefabricated metal, stood perched on one of the outer corners. Opposite, packed tightly against the rock face, the emergency hangar rose in a gentle curve—a sheen of aluminum in contrast with the purple background of rejuvenite. Between them, the launching ramp stretched lengthwise down the runway, inclining steeply for the first fifty feet, then leveling out so that the cruel blast of the takeoff would be dispersed harmlessly over the edge of the precipice.

A few small store sheds were the only other signs of habitation.

It was too hot to do anything constructive. They relaxed in their deck-chairs, grateful for the way in which the fans moved the monotonous heat into unexpected currents of warm air.

Walter Pellinger looked upward expectantly, a sudden movement that caused the little beads of perspiration on his head to run together and course down his neck in a steady stream. He ran a handkerchief around the inside of his collar.

"What's the time?" he asked.

"Quarter past ten," said Tarsh.

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"All right, Jason, you've had your fun. Now perhaps you'll consult the right dial. We'd all like to know."

"I can never get used to these five-hour days," said Gillian Murray. "It makes one feel so restless."

Curtis Delman frowned in mock reproof. The lawyer was in his prime, the natural strength of his features enhanced by the iron-gray hair and powerful physique.

"Really, Gillian," he said, "you ought to be thankful it's summer. At least, you've got three hours of daylight."

"Well, I can't understand it," said John Bridge. "We've been here sixty Earth days and the sun always sets at the same time."

"Nonsense," Delman replied. "It's been later each day. Though not much, I grant you. Remember, summer still has nine years to run."

"Will someone please tell me the time?" said Walter Pellinger.

Jason Tarsh regarded him with approval. "That's much better. It's two o'clock."

OF the five of them, John Bridge and Jason Tarsh were the least changed. True, that 'lucky fool,' as Walter Pellinger called Bridge, had lost a good deal of weight and his face was not quite so full as it had been, but it was the same John Bridge who had climbed on board at Jupiter. The change in Jason Tarsh was even less marked. Time had ironed out a few creases here and there, and his back was straighter. But, apart from that, he looked the same at fifty as he had at a hundred—gaunt, resilient and merciless.

"It's due anytime now," said Walter Pellinger, his eyes still fixed on the empty segment of horizon above the near end of the runway.

The others remained silent. The lawyer imagined that they were all thinking of the incoming spaceboat. The landing today was something like a dress-rehearsal for their own departure in thirty days. It broke the tedium of their existence and with it would come a change of staff, the unloading of supplies and the news from home. But when the next landing took place, they themselves would be waiting, young and eager, to go back and start life afresh.

Gillian Murray was looking toward the door behind them, her lovely profile turned in his direction. He followed the line of her gaze. There, in the hallway, stood the two house servants, man and wife. They had both arrived on the relief spaceboat a month ago, a comfortable, mid-

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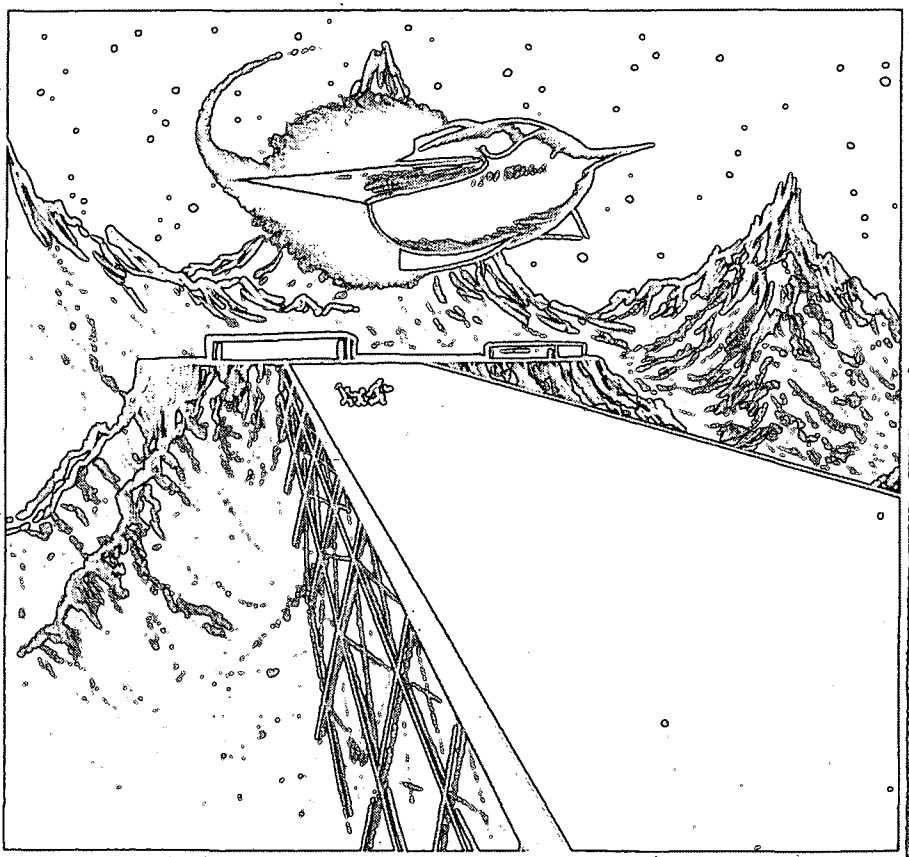
dle-aged couple. Now they were almost like children, leaping up and down with impatience, counting every second which brought Captain Ross nearer—young, graceful creatures, hand in hand, reunited in their youth.

Delman found himself smiling in sympathy. "Yes," he said, "those are the vital years."

"I was just thinking the same thing." She turned to him. There were tears of happiness in her eyes. At that moment, he caught a glimpse of her real beauty, something deeper than the merely physical—a purity of expression mirrored from within, clear and composed, like a reflection of the soul.

"There it is!" Walter Pellinger announced excitedly. He pointed.

Out in the distance, a small speck hurtled toward them. Soon



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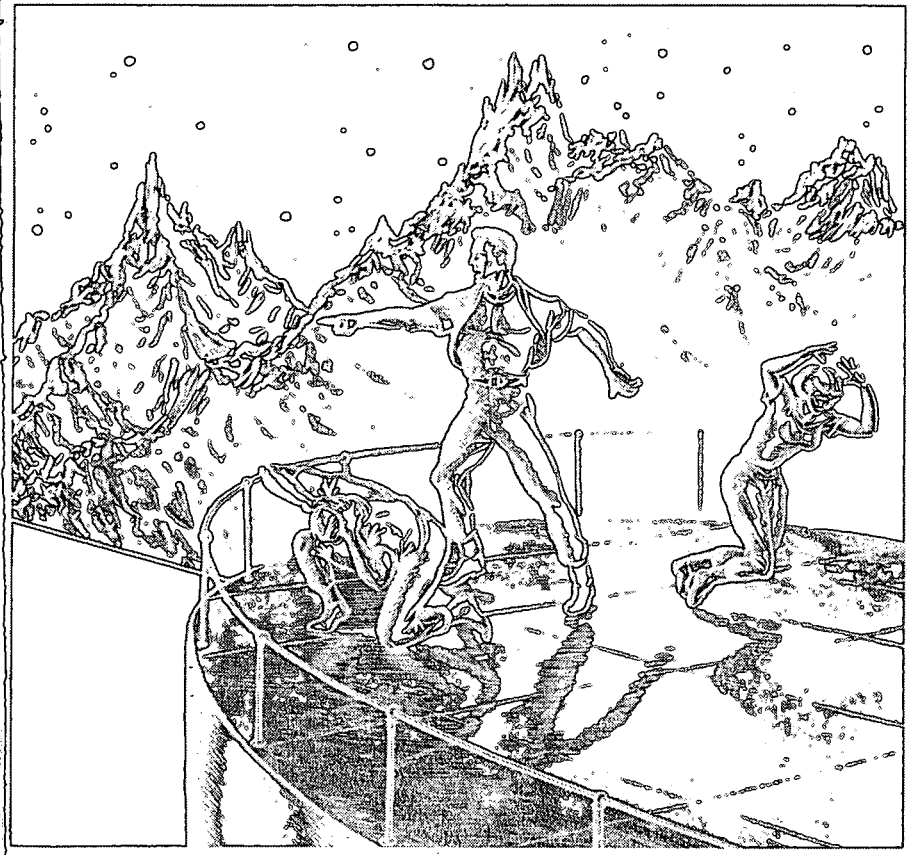
it would streak low overhead, until a final burst from the jets brought it to a halt at the far end of the runway.

The two young servants could restrain themselves no longer. Oblivious to danger, they began to run down the side of the landing-strip, racing toward a spot parallel to where they knew the spaceboat would draw to a standstill.

It was John Bridge who noticed them. The others were all looking in the opposite direction. He leaped to his feet and dashed outside.

"Come back!" he yelled. "For God's sake, come back! You'll get caught by the blast!"

THEY were so intent that they paid no heed to him. He ran on after them, trying to make



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himself heard, forgetful of his own peril.

"Look!" The strong fingers of Jason Tarsh dug deep into the lawyer's arm. Delman turned instinctively. Nearly four hundred yards away, three figures stumbled back toward the house.

"It's too late," Delman said. "Get down, all of you! If Ross sees them, he may try to overshoot. If he's going too slowly, he'll have to use the rear jets and they might splash us. Get down!"

They flattened themselves out on the floor of the veranda.

Above them, the thin whine of the approaching craft switched into a deep roar, then cut out almost instantly.

Delman saw the flash of silver overhead as the spaceboat fought to recover altitude. One moment, it was climbing; the next, it veered sharply to the left and hit the cliff.

Sound and light combined, deafening and dazzling, as the force of the explosion thrust outward, tearing at the foundations of the house itself.

When the hail of falling rock had died away, they got up and looked around them. It was difficult to determine the extent of the damage, for dust swirled and eddied in all directions. Only gradually did the details emerge from the surrounding mist.

The crash had caused a small avalanche. Rubble littered the smooth width of the runway. Of the spaceboat, there was nothing to be seen but a scar on the mountainside.

John Bridge and the two servants had vanished.

"That crazy old fool," said Walter Pellinger. "I might have known he'd mess things up."

"It wasn't him," Gillian Murray replied. "I think it was the servants. I'm sure I heard him shout a warning at them."

"*You think! You think!*" Walter Pellinger shook his head vigorously from side to side. His ears were still ringing from the blast. "He's dead, Miss Murray. You hear me? He's dead! He doesn't need a champion now!"

Gillian Murray flushed. "Why, you ungrateful—"

"Shut up, both of you!" said Jason Tarsh angrily. "Can't you see there's work to be done? We've got to clear the runway."

Curtis Delman left the veranda rail and came toward them. "And just how do you propose to do that, Mr. Tarsh?" he asked quietly.

ALL of them looked at the lawyer in amazement. Jason Tarsh laughed derisively.

"Listen to him!" he exclaimed. "The Great Man! Wants to know how you remove a few small stones!"

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"You damned idiot!" said Delman savagely. "Use your eyes! Why were this house and the storage sheds prefabricated? Just for the hell of it? Dozens of useless trips when you could build what you wanted from rock? Until today, there wasn't a loose pebble in this godforsaken place! Didn't that strike you as odd? Well, didn't it?"

Tarsh made no reply.

The lawyer moved back to the veranda rail. "There!" he said, pointing at a near-lying stone the size of a tennis ball. "Go ahead, try your strength. Throw it over the side!"

Uncertainly, Jason Tarsh walked into the open. They watched him as he bent down to pick up the small purple lump. For nearly a minute, he strained and tugged at the dead, unyielding weight in front of him. Then, slowly, he straightened up and returned to the veranda.

"You're right," he said grudgingly. "I couldn't lift it."

Delman nodded. "Considering it's more than ten times the weight of lead, that's not surprising."

"Anyhow, there's one consolation," said Jason Tarsh. "We weren't on that spaceboat."

The lawyer regarded him with pity. "No, we weren't," he said, "but whether it's a consolation remains to be seen."

"What are you driving at?" demanded Walter Pellinger. "They'll send a rescue party. They must know there's something wrong."

"Oh, yes," Delman agreed. "But they don't know what and we can't tell them. And, even if they did know, what could they do?" He began to stroll up and down the veranda. "As far as they're concerned, Ross hasn't reported to Algon. Perhaps his transmitter failed. Perhaps he blew up in space. There are plenty of possibilities. If they treat the matter as an emergency, the relief boat may get here in twenty-eight days instead of thirty. But it can't land and it can't hover, so what good is it to us?"

"Now wait, Delman. You know the reputation of Rejuvenal Enterprises. A company like that can't afford to take a risk. They'll send for a patrol ship—"

"And those patrol ships are equipped with heli-cars," Tarsh interjected. "They can launch a couple and pick us up in no time. It's not difficult."

Pellinger nodded in agreement. "There you are. And Jason ought to know; he's spent most of his life dodging them."

DELMAN looked at Tarsh with distaste. "I remember now. You were the man who shipped girls to Mercury and got

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run in under Section 7 of the White Slavery Act. Ten years, wasn't it?"

"That's right," Jason Tarsh answered, "but there's no need to be nasty about it. Just fulfilling the old commercial custom of supply and demand." His thin lips broke into a smile. "Know what they used to call me in the camps? 'The Miner's Best Friend.' Nice of them, eh?"

"Was it? They gave the same name to their canaries in the old days—and most of those were killed by fire-damp. But to get back to your mythical patrol ship—where do you expect it to come from? You know as well as I do, they keep to the main spaceways. We're tucked away in a remote corner of the Galaxy. There's one chance in a thousand that a patrol ship is within forty-five days of here."

The color drained from Walter Pellinger's face. "Why forty-five?" he whispered.

The lawyer paused before replying. They were grouped around him in a half-circle, three frightened people waiting for an answer, yet knowing in their hearts what that answer would be.

He shrugged. "I should have thought it was obvious," he said. "Of course, I've no wish to alarm you and there is a method that might get us out of here, but we've got to face the facts. I was the only one among you whose legs had already begun to fail, so it's safe to assume I'm the oldest inhabitant. In forty-five days, I shall be ten—the rest of you will be less—and I can't guarantee to look after you any longer than that." He fell silent, allowing the implication to sink in.

"Seven million dollars!" cried Walter Pellinger. "I've paid seven million dollars just to die!" He began to laugh hysterically.

"Stop it, you fool!" Jason Tarsh caught him by the shoulders and began to shake him violently. "You've paid seven million dollars to die young. Why, you ought to be tickled pink. Remember the slogan of Galactic Stores—'Originality is the Test of Taste!' "

Gillian Murray seized the lawyer's hand. "Curtis, you said something about a method."

He pointed at the emergency hangar over on the far side. "There's a lifeboat in there. It may have been damaged by the blast, so don't pin your hopes on it. But if we can shift the loose stones and get the doors open, we'll soon know."

Arm in arm, they walked across the landing strip.

TWICE the relief boat shot low over the runway, sweeping round in a gigantic circle. Then

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it changed course and climbed steeply into the stratosphere. They watched it disappear out of sight—the last link with the world they knew.

In the center of the landing strip, a dense column of smoke billowed up from a pile of smoldering moss—a warning that no pilot could fail to observe. In the stillness, it rose in a tall spiral, twisting and turning, signaling to the winds.

"You should've let it land." Walter Pellinger was almost in tears; he blinked miserably.

DELMAN had never pictured him like this, small, myopic, with fair hair and sloping shoulders. The structure of his eyes had changed during the intervening weeks and the contact lenses he'd worn until recently were quite useless to him. Now, at twenty-one, he was half-blind and of little practical help to them.

"They didn't stand a chance," the lawyer replied.

"Oh, but they did! On the Law of Probability, they had one in sixty-seven—and our lives are worth a thousand of theirs."

"Yes, I know. Our lives are essential to humanity. You've said it all before and I still disagree with you."

"Have I? I don't remember."

"You have. But it doesn't matter. Come on back. We've got to clear those stones. There aren't many left."

As he strode toward the hangar, the lawyer knew that the days were running short. True, the launching ramp was intact and one door of the hangar was already open; but it would take at least a week to remove the chunks of rejuvenite blocking the remaining door. Tarsh and himself had done most of the heavy work. Yet even Tarsh, with all his feline strength, was beginning to tire. The constant effort to make use of every scrap of daylight was proving too much for them.

According to Gillian, the lifeboat was unharmed. Delman hadn't the time to inspect it properly. But the very position of the hangar, squeezed tight against the cliffside, had given it the best protection possible. No, if only they could remove those stones!

Delman exhaustedly picked up his discarded crowbar. He inserted the point under a slab of rejuvenite, thrust down and pried with all his strength. As it tilted, Gillian Murray forced chocks of metal underneath to hold it in place. The teamwork was repeated time after time, until at last the slab toppled over, gaining them another twelve inches. They rested for a moment. Then

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the whole endless process started once again.

By dusk, they had removed five stones.

FINISHED eating, they relaxed in the living room, lying back in the padded comfort of the armchairs. Only Jason Tarsh remained standing—slim and compact, like a young Oriental despot—his eyes fixed on Walter Pellinger.

Pellinger squirmed uncomfortably in his seat. "I think I'll try and get some sleep," he said.

"Just a moment, Walter," Tarsh lifted a restraining hand. "You're a businessman and I want your advice. It's quite a simple problem. Imagine that four of your employees are stranded on a desert island with very little food. And suppose they all agree to build a raft on which to escape and get back to the head office—what you might call a 'joint venture.' Now let us also suppose that three of those people work hard, cut down trees and fashion them into planks, gather creepers and braid them into ropes, and generally do all they can to further the common purpose. But the fourth, Walter—and this is the point—the fourth does nothing. He eats the food—Company food, mind you!—so urgently needed to keep up the strength of the—"

"Why do you keep picking on me? I do all I can." Walter Pellinger got out of his chair.

"*You?*" said Jason Tarsh, affecting amazement. "Who said anything about *you*? Why, you're the last person I'd criticize. But I see you wish to leave the lovebirds to themselves, so let's finish our little chat outside. It's a fine night." He steered the unwilling Pellinger out onto the veranda.

"Well, shall we take a hint and move over to the settee?" Gillian Murray suggested.

Delman watched with admiration as she crossed the room, clean-limbed and graceful, her long red hair falling from the crown of her head in a soft cascade.

"Never be discourteous to the cook," he replied. "That was one of my earliest lessons. And, heaven knows, you're an unusually attractive cook. It gives one an appetite just to look at you." He got up to join her—a bearded giant, tall and deep-chested, like the heroes of the Viking sagas.

"What will you do when we get back?" she asked.

"Marry and get some job that won't take me away from you. Does that meet with your approval?"

"Yes," she said. "If that's a proposal, it will do nicely."

They kissed with all the in-

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tensity of young love, losing in their embrace the dread of time which swept them toward their childhood.

"Curtis," she said quietly, "have we any hope? Please be honest!"

HIS fingers brushed the back of her neck lightly, up and down, not altering their tender rythm.

"Not much," he said without emotion.

"Jason was right about the food. There's very little left; the supplies were on the spaceboat. You're all hungry. I know you are."

"It's not only that, darling. Sleep is just as important. But we can't spare the time. Every day now, we'll be growing physically weaker and the same job will soon take us twice as long. There's so much to do. And we've got to plan all of it in advance, while our minds are still adult."

"Is that why you've got the recording machine down here?"

"It may sound idiotic," he said, "but I can't remember my boyhood—it was four hundred years ago. Today, I'm twenty-five, you're twenty, and Walter is somewhere between the two of us. Jason, I'm sure, is less—how much, I don't know. The fact is that we'll be children before we leave—that is, *if* we leave—and we'll only be able to understand the simple things. So it seemed essential to clarify the lifeboat instructions; the manual would be complete nonsense to a child. Of course, I've added some general advice as it occurred to me."

Gillian sighed. "I don't think I'll like being married to you," she said. "You think of everything. May I switch on the recording machine?"

"Go ahead," he replied. "It will take a few seconds to warm up, though."

She kissed him lightly, then uncurled herself and went over to the recorder. The purr of the machine gradually increased in pitch until it passed from the range of human hearing. The silence was broken by his own voice.

"Curtis!" it said, "Curtis! Do not touch the controls until you are sure that Gillian and Walter and Jason are all in the cabin. Are they all there? Good. Then pull the big lever toward you. Now—"

Jason Tarsh entered the room and switched off the machine. "You can delete Walter," he said. He began to ape the slow, earnest delivery of the recorder. "For he is a sill-y boy and fell o-ver the edge of the cliff." He smiled and continued in normal tones, "Very unfortunate. Should never have left him alone, poor guy. Blind

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as a bat. Oh, well, bigger breakfasts tomorrow. Good night."

IT was noon. The whole ledge shimmered in the sun, hazy and indistinct, as the rising currents of air dispersed the light in a jumble of refracted motion.

On the runway, between the hangar and the house, stood a nine-year-old boy. A small, motionless figure, with a towel around his waist and his feet bandaged for protection against the blistering heat of the rock, he gazed up in triumph at the launching ramp.

There, perched on the summit of the ramp, lay the squat, powerful bulk of the lifeboat.

He turned and ran joyfully back to the house. "Jill!" he called. "Jill, come and play! And bring Jason with you."

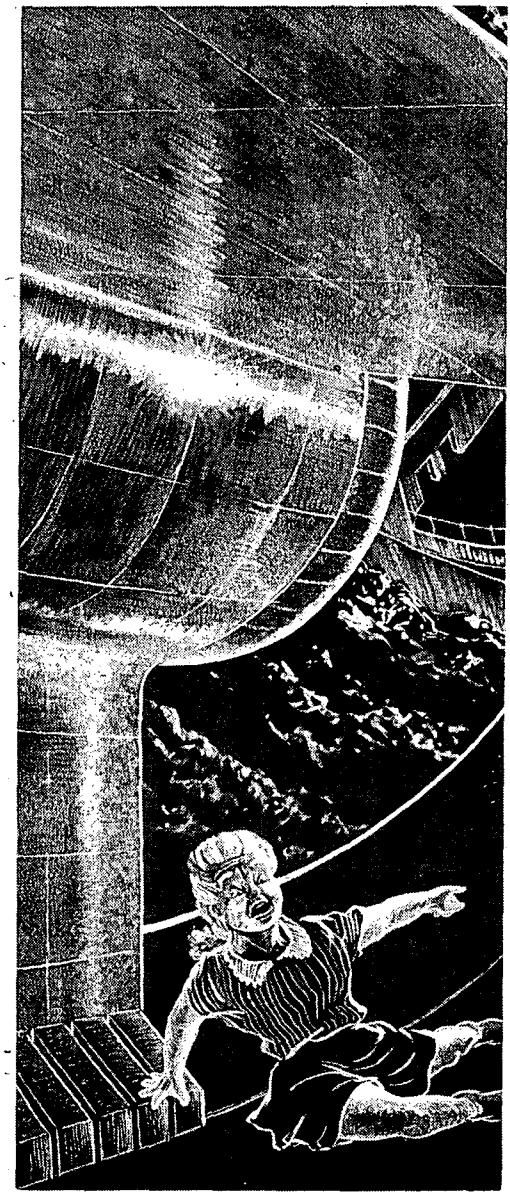
A little girl, her red hair unbrushed, stepped out onto the veranda. "Don't want to bwing Jason," she said. "He's mean."

"You must bring Jason," he insisted, "or you can't play."

"What we going to play?"

" 'Ships,' " he said. He pointed to the top of the launching ramp.

Silently, the two children trudged across the rock-face and began to climb the steep slope of the ramp, leaning forward to retain their balance. Tucked up in a blanket in Gillian Murray's arms, Jason Tarsh bawled hun-



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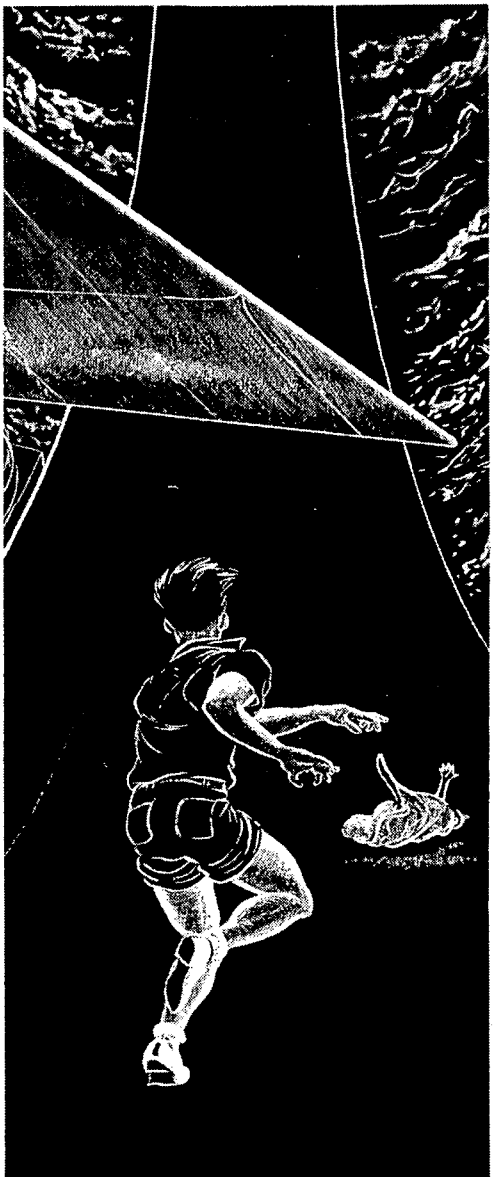

grily. Higher and higher they climbed, the only living creatures in a purple world, striving toward their goal. Curtis Delman, hampered by the weight of the recording machine, kept urging her to keep up with him. Suddenly, she stopped.

"Don't want to play," she said. "I'm tired." She sat down on the hot metal of the ramp, placing the baby beside her.

He let her rest for a few minutes, then tried to coax her to carry on. "You're a sissy," he said. "You're afraid!"

Her eyes brimmed with tears. "I'm not a sissy," she cried. "I'm not! I'm not! I'm *not*!"

Delman turned and continued climbing purposefully. "Gillian's a sissy! Gillian's a sissy!" he chanted over and over again.

Panting with weariness and indignation, she struggled after him.

They had covered more than half the distance before he looked back. He saw her following and prepared to go on again. Then he realized something was wrong and swung around, startled. Her hands were empty!

"Where's Jason?" he cried out.

SHE was too exhausted to reply and stared at him blankly. Putting down the recording machine, he ran past her. Some twenty yards away, the bundle of

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blanket that was Jason Tarsh began to roll gently down the slope.

He raced after it, his swift young legs moving as easily and painlessly as pistons. He reached the bundle just before the change in gradient which marked the first half of the ramp. Horrified, he increased his speed. Propelled by the sharp incline, the bundle branched off at a tangent. He caught it just as it was about to plunge over the side. When he picked up the blanket, it was curiously light.

There was nothing inside it.

Very slowly, he clambered back up the slope.

As he came level with Gillian, he put his arm around her shoulders. "Don't worry," he said. "Jason was too small to play." Taking her by the hand, he led her to the short, vertical ladder which led into the lifeboat.

After the harsh glare of the sun, the cabin seemed dark and strange. What light there was was filtered through six small portholes—three on either side—in which the glass was tinted a deep blue.

It took him nearly ten minutes to strap Gillian into the safety harness, and by the time he had adjusted his own, she was asleep. He stretched out his right hand and switched on the recorder.

"Curtis!" it began.

Calmly, he carried out the instructions. The deep, commanding voice left nothing to chance.

A pull on the master lever drew up the ladder and closed the hatch in hydraulic silence. The soft whistle of oxygen escaped from pressurized cylinders. An automatic transmitter broadcast an endless S.O.S. Deep in the heart of the lifeboat, dynamos pulsed with the throb of power.

"Now, Curtis," said the voice from the past, "turn the red switch in front of you to 'Fixed Control.' Have you turned the red switch to 'Fixed Control'? Then lie back and fasten your safety harness as tight as you can. Have you done that?"

"Yeah," Curtis said, lying back.

"You've done everything you had to do," the voice continued. "Now shut your eyes and don't move! Everything will be all right. The two of you will reach Earth. You don't doubt that, do you?"

"No," said Curtis, closing his eyes and relaxing, reassured by the voice from the past. "I know we'll get there."

"And the two of you will get married when you're old enough. To each other, of course."

"Of course," Curtis agreed.

"Good luck!" said the voice. "Good luck to you both!"

It clicked off then and the lifeboat sped Earthward.

—MICHAEL CATHAL

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(*Continued from page* 4)
part of the reason. There is also the nuisance and embarrassment of having to spell unfamiliar names.

And this applies not only to immigrants from Europe and Asia. Jim Thorpe and Col. Ely Samuel Parker were Indians. So was William Jacobs, otherwise known to us as Sitting Bull.

In his chapter on clothing, Stewart says, "When we Earthlings at last begin to colonize . . . whatever planet is next in line, we may find it already inhabited. . . . If so, it is to be hoped that we . . . assume that these natives are not altogether foolish in the adjustments that they have made to their environment . . . Probably, of course, we . . . shall stick by our own clothing along with our other customs, and shall be vastly uncomfortable and die by thousands . . . Certainly we shall have the precedent of those first colonists who came to America."

That precedent was a horrifying one; clad in outrageously unsuitable clothing, they died of exposure in the fierce New England winters, of sunstroke in the equally fierce Southern summers. If they had adopted Indian dress, they would have survived. But we have borrowed exactly *one* article of clothing from the Indians—the moccasin!

ONCE established, the pattern of a civilization remains remarkably fixed. While, elsewhere in the world, women were a drug on the market, they had great scarcity value in a frontier society. The situation has been completely reversed, yet the attitude has not been changed. Philip Wylie, the noted thinker, incorrectly attributes this to "Momism." An odd offshoot is the high rate of divorce and remarriage, which Stewart properly recognizes as idealism, not moral breakdown.

On the basis of past rigidity, he feels we probably will not be any more flexible when we reach the other planets. I'm afraid he may be right.

Wherever at all possible, we undoubtedly will cling to Earth-style ways of life, however wildly inadequate and even suicidal. Environment will dictate eating habits and choice of building materials . . . but mostly because of freight costs.

On the positive side, though, this stubbornness forces us to alter environment to fit our ways of life—as with central heating and air conditioning—so the result is an ultimate gain.

Whether reader or writer, you'll find that you can tunnel through this stimulating record of the past to glimpse the future.

—H. L. GOLD

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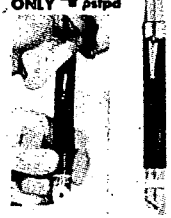

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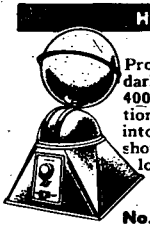

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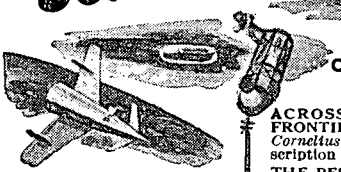

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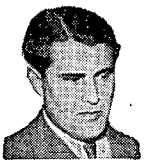

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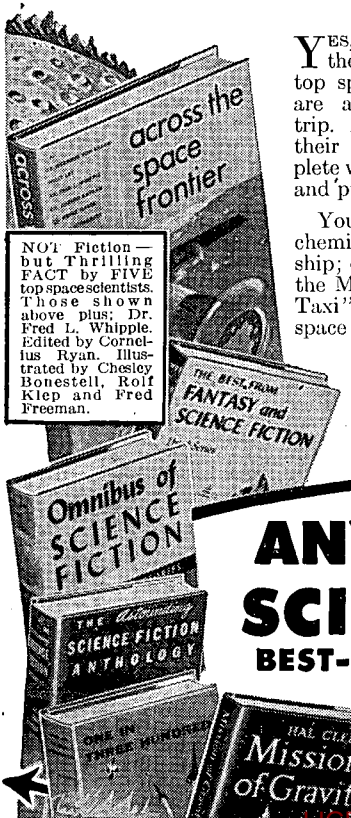
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